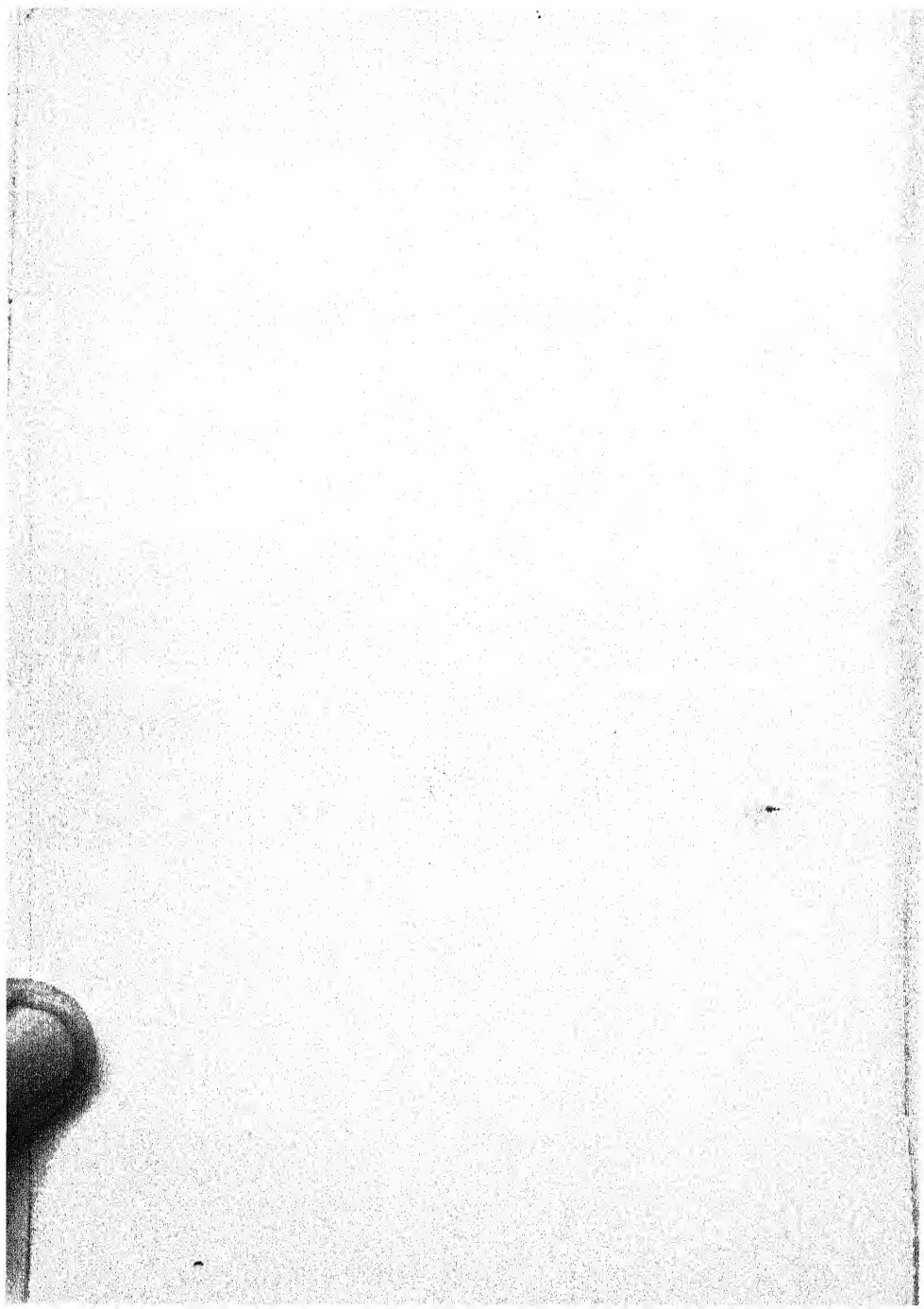


REBUILDING RURAL AMERICA



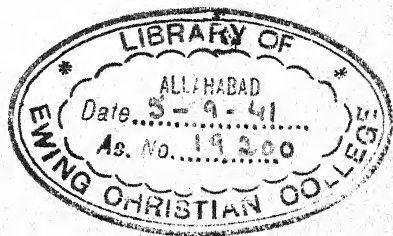


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# REBUILDING RURAL AMERICA

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*BY MARK A. DAWBER*



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FRIENDSHIP PRESS  
NEW YORK

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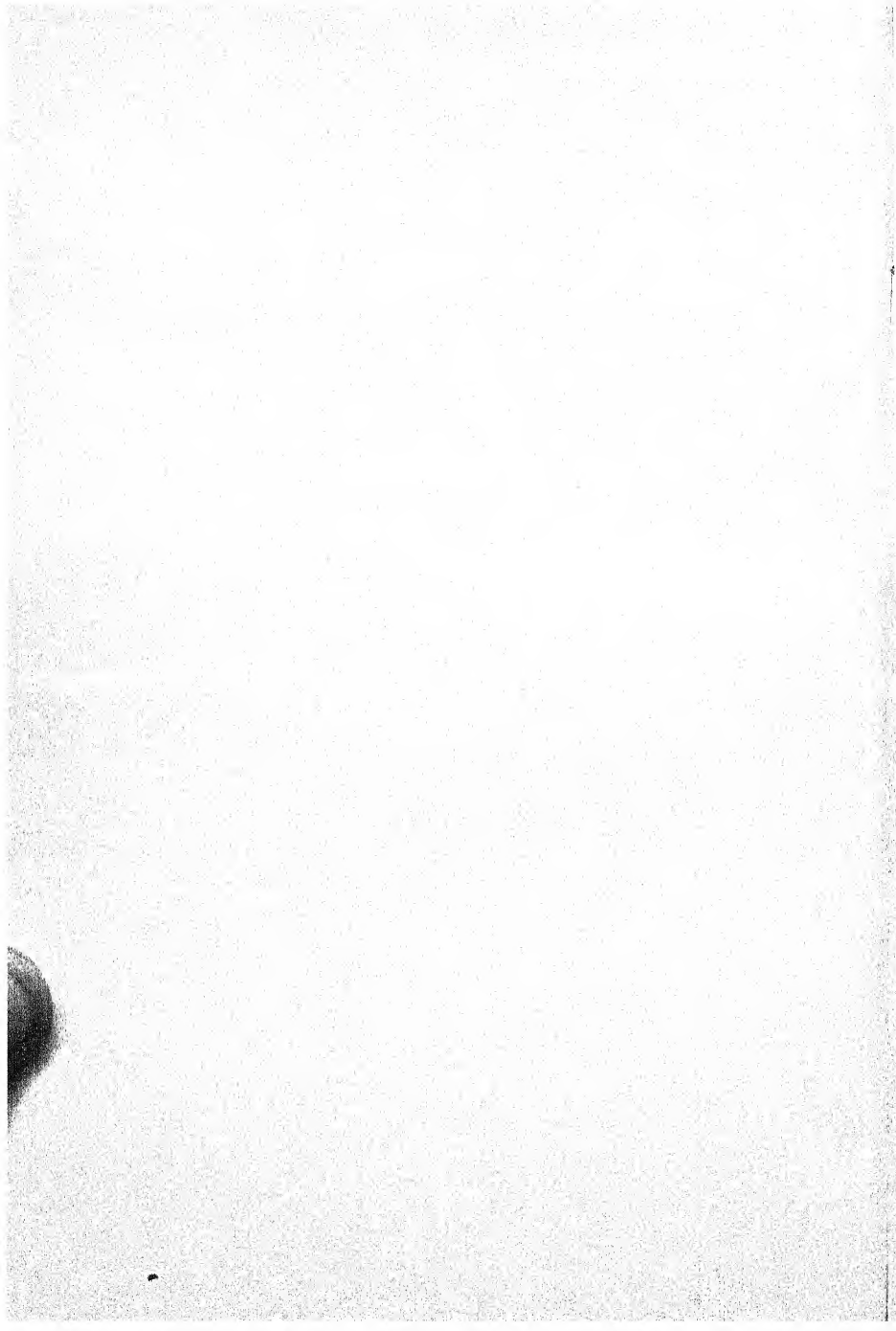
THE REVEREND MARK A. DAWBER was born and educated in England. His aptitude for music led to special training in piano and organ at the London College of Music and he expected to make music his profession. He then became interested in the social movements of the day and studied at Ruskin College, Oxford, where he took both social studies and theological courses. Later he served in the educational department of a large consumer cooperative in Manchester. He took an active part in the development of the labor movement in England, being associated with the Independent Labor Party.

Dr. Dawber came to America in 1911, and spent a year in special studies at Boston University School of Theology, Drew Theological Seminary, and Garrett Biblical Institute. He was challenged by the rural situation which he found here and accepted an appointment to an open-country circuit under the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was ordained to the ministry of that church in 1916. The success of his ministry in rural churches resulted in a call in 1919 to the chair of Rural Leadership in Boston University School of Theology. After six years in this professorship he was appointed to his present position, Superintendent of the Department of Town and Country Work of the Board of Home Missions and Church Extension of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In this capacity he has had unusual opportunity to study rural conditions in every part of the United States and Canada. He has lectured widely upon various aspects of rural life, and has been especially active in developing summer schools for the training of rural ministers.

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*To*  
MY WIFE



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## INTRODUCTION

**T**HIS book is presented with an awareness of its many deficiencies. It is impossible to crowd into its pages all the points of view and interests that clamor for a hearing. On the other hand there is nothing new in what is stated. I have tried to gather together the many and varied ideas and pronouncements and the experiences of a multitude of people who have been interested in the pursuit of a more wholesome rural life for America. The number of those to whom I am indebted is legion. I only regret that space would not permit the recital of names, were it possible to recall them, which, of course, it is not. Like Paul, I am debtor to all men. I would like, however, to express my debt of gratitude to my colleague, the Reverend Jay S. Stowell, for his valuable suggestions and generous editorial help.

Rural America is, itself, in the melting pot of change. The old individualism, out of which many of the sturdy characteristics of rural life came, is now in the discard. A new individualism is now being born, an individualism that will be willing to cooperate, in order to survive, for men everywhere must now learn to cooperate in order to maintain their in-

dependence. The individual parts must be willing to lose the lesser freedom in order to preserve the greater freedom of the whole. This new compulsion to a co-operative life in rural America is at the heart of all I have tried to say. A new philosophy must take possession of rural people; a philosophy as old as Jesus, but new, inasmuch as it has not been applied to the workaday world of rural folk. Little or nothing has been said in the book regarding this philosophy of life. For that reason it is deemed important to speak this word here. Such a philosophy is essentially Christian, and it is for that reason I am making the urgent plea to the churches in rural America to take the lead in all that concerns the welfare and progress of rural life. To that end, it will be necessary to practise more of this philosophy and preach less. We must help rural America to find new ways of unity for its social, economic and political life, but to do so will require us to apply this philosophy to our moral and religious life, and, in particular, to the institutions of religion.

We must put an end to the waste and chaos and bring the wild, competing forces that are disrupting rural life into the service of harmony, cooperation and community friendship. Whatever else these pages may seem to suggest, this is the real challenge that is involved and which the church must meet: to create a new motive for life. The city needs it, but the country needs it also. It needs it for its own sake, but better still and more important, it needs it for the sake of the

cities and the nation, for if rural America should lose its soul, all other gains would be false, futile and transient, and the nation itself would face disaster. That is in large measure the explanation of the present catastrophe. If we succeed only in making life easier and pleasanter, in increasing the abundance of things, and do not, at the same time, succeed in molding the spirit of rural America to greater honor and decency, to nobler ideals and a more unselfish order, then all our work will have been in vain. To this end, then, I send forth this volume, with the hope and the prayer that from its pages those who are struggling to bring order out of the present confusion, and seeking to establish a sounder and holier rural society, may find something of inspiration and courage.

MARK A. DAWBER

*Philadelphia, Pa.*  
*April, 1937*



## I: A CHANGING RURAL AMERICA

**W**E are living between two worlds, the one dead and the other struggling to be born." In these words the late Dr. Arnold, famous headmaster of Rugby, England, aptly described the changing scene of modern civilization. Rural America is now facing the most drastic transformation in our agricultural history. The changes that struck the cities and the urban population fifteen to twenty years ago have now reached the countryside and call forth the best statesmanship that the nation can provide.

These transitions were set in motion by a new economic status, which in turn has been conditioned by the latest methods of transportation, the development of good roads, the ready and quicker means of communication, and, in particular, by technological changes in the methods of production. This new crisis in our national life has been recognized by the leaders in the government. The educational institutions are likewise slowly beginning to realize that something has happened. Leaders in other realms of rural interest are also concerned, but the church does

not seem to grasp the seriousness of the situation and to appreciate the opportunities that this crisis of radical transition presents as a means of social and spiritual reconstruction.

In the light of this social and economic liquidation, when virtually all our institutions are under the scrutiny of scientific investigation, one might well inquire as to the rural church. Where does it stand? What purpose does it serve in the reconstruction of rural life? What has it to offer to the community that other institutions cannot provide? How is it going to adjust itself and its program to new patterns of rural society, and to assist in the rebuilding of rural America? The methods of adjustment have always been most difficult. Institutions, nations, even civilizations, stand or fall before the demands of a changing world. Institutions that fail to adjust themselves to these needs decay and perish. The church is no exception, although we should remember that the church has been able to defy change and survive longer than any other institution. But, at long last, even the church must take its place in a new order or face decay. This need has now appeared in rural America, and the discussion which follows is based on the hope that it may help to inform and inspire the church and its members to a more intelligent understanding, and a new crusading interest in the social, economic and religious problems of the rural church.

## A VARIED PICTURE

The present agricultural situation cannot, however, be reflected in any one mirror, and what would help the farmers of Maine might defeat the farmers of Minnesota. The variations of rural life are almost too many to suggest. The corn and hog growers of the Middle West, the wheat producers of the vast dry areas in the Northwest, the citrus growers of California, and the farmers of the semi-tropical areas of California, Arizona, Texas and other Southern States, where special products for American tables are produced, all have their separate problems.

In this discussion of rural America and the ministry which the Christian church can and should render to it, we must consider a far-flung country extending three thousand miles east and west and more than half that distance north and south, in which live a multitude of folk inarticulate about their own problems, to say nothing of the problems of other rural sections of this extensive land. American rural life has undergone transitions during past centuries, and these will continue. In our onward march we may be sure to preserve the best that the past has had to offer, and to recognize new values as they emerge.

Good roads, quicker and better means of transportation, the telephone, the radio, newspapers, magazines, more frequent contacts with the large centers, larger educational facilities, farm organizations, scientific agriculture, consolidated schools, more inclu-

sive community groupings—these and a host of other developments attend the remaking of rural life in America.

Moreover, rural people have become a specialized people in many sections of the country. Farm families are no longer self-contained and self-sufficing. Nor are they independent units that can be put on wheels and moved into a new environment to start life anew. During the nineteenth century cheap or free land and a constantly expanding country provided a kind of safety valve for our population; but the old order of our frontier days is gone. We are challenged by the present generation as we seek to develop a rural life in America that will be consistent with high social, moral and spiritual ideals.

#### CHANGED ECONOMIC LIFE

The first farm families in America were, to a large extent, self-supporting units. They produced or made on the farm all that they used in the way of food-stuffs, fuel and clothing. The crosscut saw and the ax were essential implements. Forests provided fuel and building material in great abundance. A few sheep were sufficient to provide wool for stockings, skirts, shirts, and suits. Fortunately the housewife was skilled in converting the raw wool into all these necessary articles. What with chickens, pigs and cows, an orchard, a garden and the farm acres there was rarely any shortage of food.



But the first of many transitions came when farming ceased to be a domestic enterprise and became a great industrial business. The farm followed the trend for specialization; it no longer produces all that it consumes. In fact, were the farmer to depend upon his own produce for food, his family would go hungry.

Gradually, too, costs of government arose and taxes, once non-existent or negligible, began to assume an importance in the farmer's budget. At first the teacher "boarded around," and the road tax could be "worked out." But soon cash was demanded for these taxes, and within recent years they have mounted to such calamitous proportions as to be a matter of major concern. Many a farmer has found that taxes have made the difference between solvency and insolvency.

With the coming of the automobile and other instruments of our modern economic life, the farmer was suddenly faced with new devices costing many hundreds of dollars for which the farm was not prepared to pay. The farm income, which had sufficed to keep the family going through past generations, suddenly failed to meet the cost of the new luxuries that became necessities. The automobile, phonograph and radio, along with improved equipment like the motor tractor, devices that science suddenly made available, profoundly changed the rural economy. Apparently the relationship between industry and

agriculture was not prepared for such a strain, for, like the factory wage earner, the farmer was tempted beyond his ability to withstand this economic pressure.

There can be little doubt that the major economic crises in American agriculture have resulted from the failure and apparent inability of agriculture to adjust itself to new conditions of life. Herein lies the cause of much of the acute economic distress in our rural areas. It is also necessary to point out that the income of rural people and of agriculture has suffered a terrific loss. To be sure, the incomes of all classes of workers have been reduced during the depression, but the farm income has been suffering a depression for nearly twenty years. And while it was reduced, the farmer's cost of living went up, so that the purchasing power of rural people has fallen to an even lower level than that of other workers. To restore the purchasing power of the rural people would do more than any other single thing to revive industry and to start the nation on the road to sound business prosperity. Farmers, as a class, are the largest buyers of necessities. A depressed agriculture is inevitably followed by depressed industry. There can be no stable prosperity in industry unless there is economic stability and an equivalent prosperity in agriculture. This again is not a matter of selfish interest for rural people; it is a question of national concern. Agriculture is still the primary industry.

Upon its economic strength the nation's economic life will finally be determined.

The real problem faces us: Can and should agriculture be made to bear the cost of all the modern conveniences of life? If so, these devices must be paid for by increased prices for agricultural output, or generous government checks for crop destruction or non-production. The farmer now shares the economic problems of the city dweller, and many adjustments must be worked out. Meanwhile the question arises: Is there not for all of us a still better way of life in which happiness and social values are not so closely associated with the amassing of material things?

But our purpose is not so much to present a comprehensive picture of the economic situation in rural America as to point out that American rural life has passed through a rapid economic evolution, and that we are today faced with new problems which demand new solutions.

### A CHANGING POPULATION

A shifting population is one of the most difficult aspects of our changing national economy. During the last century America has witnessed many such movements of people, first to the city, then back to the land. Whenever a crisis comes in the city and in industry, there has immediately followed a movement of the population back to the country. Mother Earth

has ever been a refuge in time of trouble. Many such movements have been temporary; as soon as the call came from the cities, the people went back to the high wages, the white lights, and the attractive, engulfing appeals of city life.

In recent years there has been another back-to-the-land movement, and never before in our history have so many people joined this migration in a similar period of time. For this reason we have today the largest rural population America has ever known. Some 54,000,000 people are now living in the rural territory, of whom about 31,000,000 are on the farms, and depend upon agriculture to earn their living.

The rural classification is that used by the Bureau of the Census and includes all places of 2,500 population or under. The 1930 census gives the urban population as 68,954,823 and the rural as 53,820,223. Since that time some 3,000,000 more have returned to the country, so that today about 45 per cent of the population are living in rural America. So much has been written about the growth of the cities and the miracle of America's expanding industrialism, that it is quite easy to overlook the striking developments in rural life, in agriculture, and in this growing rural population. Studies made even in the most backward rural sections reveal that there is no longer an empty cabin, and, in some areas, the people have moved back to the most impossible marginal land and have

built tar-paper shacks in which they and their families are living until they get a new grip on life.

The technological development in industry was able, until recent years, to reabsorb into industry those workers who were displaced by the new machinery. The same was true in agriculture. There has been tremendous progress in the methods of agricultural production. All through the period of industrial expansion there was a corresponding demand for food and raw materials, so that during recent years we have increased the number of farms by about half a million. American agriculture, stimulated by industry, was able to buy labor-saving devices, and all was well as long as industry could absorb, in some other way, those who were displaced by modern machinery. But the saturation point came when industry was unable to do so, a failure which gave us the recent tragic picture of unemployment.

It is satisfying to know that the rural-trained factory worker has never found it easy to forget the farm. While the city wages held him in his tenement or cottage, he still dreamed of a real home in the country with a cow, some chickens, a pig and a garden. When hard luck came along, it was natural for him to return to the scenes of his boyhood's memories.

Thus these conflicting allurements of industry and agriculture have always created a double stream of migration: a great host of rural youth was continually lured by industry, while another body of people,

more or less disillusioned, made its way back to the countryside. During the World War and the period of false prosperity that followed, the inducements offered by industry were abnormal, resulting in a cityward migration larger than usual. In more recent years, when the factories closed down, as great a tide returned to the farm. Within three years 3,000,000 people left the cities for the land, and it looks as if a large proportion of them will have to gain their living from the soil in the immediate future. The following paragraphs appearing in a recent issue of the *Southwest American*, a daily newspaper of Fort Smith, Arkansas, picture vividly this back-to-the-land movement. The editorial, "An Army of Pioneers Beginning Life Anew in Rocky Ozark Hills," said:

Among the rocky hills of the Missouri-Arkansas Ozarks, where land is cheap and living cheaper still, a new army of pioneers is sowing the seeds of a new day.

Hundreds of families, from industrial Detroit, from the flat wheat lands of western Kansas, from tax-ridden Chicago, from Kansas City and California and a dozen and one other sections where they no longer fit into the economic scheme of things, are turning to the Ozarks for a new start in life.

Abandoned farmhouses are being patched up and reclaimed.

New dwellings—comfortable and attractive houses that cost the amateur builders from \$300 to \$3,000, crude log cabins and box houses built for as little as \$25, tiny but attractive cottages costing from \$250 to \$500—are springing up fast in cleared patches along the highways.

Most of these twentieth century pioneers are making a go of it. The requirements for success appear the same that always have prevailed in a pioneer movement—courage to endure privations, willingness to work, and common sense.

Decrepit motor cars are the covered wagons of this farm movement. Grubstakes from relatives, proceeds from the sale of household goods and a share in their former city homes, meager savings from days when they had employment, provide the capital for many of these pioneer ventures.

Similarly in many parts of the country disillusioned and often impoverished people are returning to wrest from the soil sufficient food for their families, and, wherever possible, to add to the supply of foodstuffs available in our markets. Of course, this back-to-the-land movement is not found in every section of the country. In certain parts of New York, Pennsylvania, and New England an exodus to the cities, or more often to the larger towns, is taking place. In many New York townships there has been a gradual decrease of the agricultural population due to local conditions. But enough has been said to indicate that these shifts of population are the primary cause of the decline of the church.

#### FROM OWNERSHIP TO TENANCY

Perhaps the most tragic aspect of the changed economic life of rural America is the decline from farm ownership to tenancy. This is taking place in the



more highly developed agricultural states like Iowa, Kansas and Nebraska, where the best farm land is to be found, and therein lies its greater peril. Within the past twenty years farm tenancy in these states has increased from 25 to nearly 50 per cent. During the same period about 600,000 farmers lost their farms and an equal number were reduced from farm ownership to tenantry.

The subject of farm ownership in a democracy is one of vital national concern. This alarming increase in farm tenancy is a social and economic disaster. We are in danger of losing some of the most significant contributions that pioneer farmers left to us as a heritage in our national life. The following table shows the magnitude of the problem:

PERCENTAGE OF FARMS OPERATED BY TENANTS

	1930	1935
Kansas .....	42.0	44.0
Illinois .....	43.1	44.5
South Dakota .....	44.6	48.6
Nebraska .....	47.1	49.3
Iowa .....	47.3	49.6

In 1880 only 25 per cent of the farms were in the hands of tenants. The problem of tenantry has mainly been in the South, but it is now moving north. The two Southern States having the highest percentage of tenantry are Georgia (65.9) and Mississippi (69.8).

Now we would not argue that all tenantry is bad, and that it is impossible to maintain an agricultural



status without it. Some of the European countries have continued to make progress with a tenant farmer program, but it has been a vastly different kind of tenantry from that which obtains in rural America. Moreover, it is of interest to note that in those European countries where farm tenantry has obtained for centuries, the trend is towards ownership. This is particularly true in Great Britain and Denmark. In Denmark there is only about six per cent of tenantry in agriculture. This is also a testimony to their splendid system of cooperatives, about which more will be said later.

A recent personal experience will illustrate what is taking place upon the farms. I recently visited a farm in Iowa, and after some general conversation the farmer, one of the upstanding citizens of the county, a leader in a number of farm interests, and a good supporter of the church, volunteered the information: "I was born on this farm; my father was a tenant farmer. I decided that if the time should ever come that I could succeed my father I would become the owner of this farm. For nearly twenty years I have owned this farm, working to pay off the mortgage. For five years I owned it outright. I did not owe a dollar upon it. Now, I do not own a stick or a stone of it. I am a tenant again, but working under greater difficulties as a tenant than my father ever knew."

No great stretch of imagination is necessary to

visualize thousands of such farmers in America, or to understand their deep feeling of resentment and defeatism over their lost ownership.

But the economic aspect of the loss of ownership is only part of the story. The social and spiritual loss is one of great significance to the church. It is impossible to develop the kind of community life so necessary for rural well-being, if the majority of the farmers are tenants. They cannot and they do not support the institutions of the community. And the first to suffer this loss is the church. Tenant farmers do not support the church as a general rule. Where tenantry is rife you will see an impoverished people, down-at-the-heel communities, and schools and churches gasping for their existence. Farm ownership is a determining factor in human well-being, not only from the economic standpoint but also psychologically. Farm ownership goes hand in hand with a predisposition for education and the building of good communities and a democratic citizenship.

This again is not a matter of selfish concern for rural life and rural people. It is a matter of great national importance. The question of farm ownership or tenantry will in large measure determine the life of the nation and ultimately set the destiny of our civilization. The problem of this change from ownership to tenantry demands the study and help of all those who are interested in the spiritual progress of America. The Federal government is begin-

ning to take this problem of farm tenancy seriously. As these lines are being written the report of the President's Farm Tenancy Committee appears. This striking document recommends the creation of a Farm Security Administration to deal primarily with the evils of tenancy. It suggests that Federal and state legislation should aid tenants to become owners, help farm laborers to a better status, protect the debt-burdened farmers against the loss of their farms, and conserve farm youth "whose future and insecurity is a threat to the integrity of rural life." The report recommends that definite immediate steps be taken, and suggests sweeping Federal action with the warning that "rural civilization is threatened with decadence." The members of the committee are evidently alive to the social and spiritual peril that is inherent in farm tenancy. But is the church equally alive and concerned?

#### AN ENLARGED RURAL RADIUS

From the time Europeans first hewed their way into American forests and cleared enough ground on which to raise a crop, American rural dwellers have, until recent years, lived their lives within narrow geographical limits. But the modern transportation has enlarged the radius of rural life and created an absolutely new range in which rural people now "live and move and have their being." With the rapid and widespread use of automobiles has come

a demand for more and better roads. Today in most parts of the country a horse-drawn conveyance is regarded as an antique, and walking is engaged in only by those who need exercise. The bearing of all this upon rural institutions and life has been most profound. The farmer has shifted his patronage from the village grocery or the nearest general store, to the city department store, purchasing household necessities at bargain prices. Moreover, the chain stores have appeared in the larger towns. All of that has meant the weakening, even the entire disruption, of crossroads trade, which in the early days of America played so large a part in rural life.

This breakdown of small trade centers has affected much more than the economic exchange of the countryside. The family organization has likewise suffered from this radical shifting of interests from the local unit to a much larger area. The farm family, once dependent on nearby neighbors for their associations, now travel long distances to visit friends, and visitors to the home come from fifty, sixty or a hundred miles away as easily as from the nearest farm. Even the topics of conversation around the family dinner table have been affected by this enlarged geographical scope, for the affairs of the county seat town are now as much a concern of the farm family as are those of the hamlet near at hand.

And this enlargement of interests has reacted upon the rural school, the rural church, the lodges and

other institutions which have, for generations, played such an important part in the life of rural America.

#### A CHANGING COMMUNITY

However, expansion alone is not a satisfactory interpretation of what has happened to rural America as a result of the new devices and technique of living. It is not so much that the rural community has enlarged as that the original communities have been displaced by groups which have a community of interest, but bear only a slight resemblance to the older community of limited horizons.

The term "community" in American life has had for its primary sense a group of people living in close proximity to one another, and forced to share many common interests and enterprises. In such a community the same people met at church, conversed around the country store, voted at school meeting, worked on the road together, attended husking bees and engaged in a multitude of other common enterprises. There was little choice, for they were the slaves of life's exactions and of a geography limited by mud and the physical strength and speed of man or beast.

Today the dairymen's meetings in the county seat have taken the place of the discussions which once occurred around the stove in the country store, but they are not community meetings in the real sense of that term. Roadmaking, which was once

a community enterprise, is now a state or a Federal function. Schools are no longer district enterprises, but are jointly managed by the township or the county and the state. In many communities even the local cheese factory has disappeared and milk is shipped hundreds of miles for consumption or manufacture. These economic enterprises which formed the very substance of the life of the community are gone and nothing seems likely to take their place.

There has probably never before been a moment in American history when the rural community has been so weak. Whether it can be rebuilt to anything like its former effectiveness, or whether it must more and more give way to overlapping interest groups, is a major problem of rural strategy about which there is a sharp difference of opinion. At this particular point, however, we are interested primarily in noting that the rural community which centered at the crossroads in the horse and buggy days is gone. To some degree a community life survives around larger and better-established village centers, but even this is being steadily weakened by the development of new group interests which are set up within the radius of one hundred miles or even more. All this has doubtless tended to enrich the lives of individuals and to enlarge the number of their contacts, but it has also robbed American life of one distinctive characteristic; namely, the familiar and neighborly association of a group of people, working together

to further all the common interests of life. Today a rural dweller meets with one group to discuss the best ways of raising poultry, with another group for his social pleasures, with still another for his religious fellowship, and frequently with yet another group for the carrying on of the business necessary to the farm. While this enlarges the outlook of American rural community life, yet it tends toward disintegration, and its replacement by the development of a strong group interest is what we must have in mind as we study the problems of rural America.

#### CHANGES IN RURAL EDUCATION

An important change has taken place in rural education. It affects the program for rural communities, involving three-fifths of the grade schools and high schools of the nation. From a mere neighborhood institution serving a limited area of some twenty to fifty families, usually a one-room, ungraded, one-teacher affair, the rural school has moved out to meet an expanding world and the enlarging opportunities for education. The little red schoolhouse to which we love to go back in memory, and upon which we have made our proud boast in the past, is being eliminated. The movement toward consolidation is one of the most significant changes now affecting rural life. Some twenty-five per cent of rural schools have moved out of the one-room class into some

form of consolidation; but about seventy-five per cent of the schools are still of the one- and two-teacher type. In 1932 there were 143,445 one-teacher schools and about 23,000 two-teacher schools.

The advancing standards of public education require a much larger provision for the education of the children and youth of rural America than many rural communities are able to provide. The contrast between the per capita expenditures for rural and urban education calls for serious consideration. Ninety per cent of grade schools and seventy per cent of high schools are rural; fifty-three per cent of public school teachers and forty-nine per cent of the pupils are in rural schools. But only forty per cent of our current national expenditure for public education is appropriated for the rural schools.

The trend toward larger units for educational purposes is one that should be encouraged, but it has perils as well as possibilities. As the larger consolidations take place the tax rate increases, and, unless some broader basis of taxation can be devised, or some change that will make possible a better income for rural people, many of these needed improvements in rural education will be delayed to the serious injury of rural children and youth.

#### THE CHANGING HOME

The rural home is also passing through the process of change. A thousand forces are busy breaking



down the home life of the nation, and the rural home is in no sense immune to these devastating forces, although they have been a little longer in reaching the rural sections. Time was when most of the social life of rural communities was a home-centered interest. The neighborhood visitation, picnics, quilting parties, church sociables, and community dances were home affairs. Many of these activities have ceased, and those that continue are often commercialized in the dance halls or movie houses of the county seat or the roadhouses in the country. These disintegrating influences have had a devastating effect upon youth. Disillusioned, because their ideals are unsatisfied, youth today are restless; what is more they are on the move, lacking direction and bereft of the guidance of the family and the church.

The reduction in the size of the farm families has also had much to do with the changing home life. Families, once large enough to be socially sufficient within themselves, are rapidly growing smaller, and, as a result, there is a loss of family solidarity that once gave a sense of resourcefulness and strength to the rural home. The changing mode of agriculture has also robbed the family of cooperative experience in labor. More of the farm tasks are now done by the machine than are done by hand. It is true that the machine has done away with a vast amount of drudgery, but it has also exposed the

family unit to a diversity of conflicting interests. The sum total of these changes is a different psychology that has brought with it new social and religious problems. There is a loss of the sense of unity and authority that yesterday was one of the noble characteristics and high values upon which the church could build its program.

#### NEW AREAS OF NEGLECT

All the changes mentioned are, for the most part, the result of material progress and development. Our quarrel is with the indifference shown to problems arising from them. They call upon the church to readjust itself to a new day because its support, its very life and future, depend upon a different community from that to which it once ministered. While many rural communities have been put on the map by the coming of good roads and better means of transportation, others, with or without their churches, have been isolated and are now remote and unreached by a social and religious ministry.

When travel was with the horse and buggy on the dirt roads, everybody was more or less accessible; now only those living on the improved roads are accessible the year round. The minister drives an automobile and has no means of reaching the people who live off the main roads. At least this is the case during the winter months of bad weather. These peo-

ple are a new, neglected group in rural life and constitute a challenge to the rural church.

In later chapters we shall deal more specifically with changes that are taking place in the rural church and in other social, religious and economic phases in rural life. If we are to understand American rural life, we must bear in mind that for at least three hundred years it has been steadily changing. Within the past generation those changes have become so kaleidoscopic that the standards of the past, either for studying rural life or for dealing with it, will no longer suffice. We must face a new day with a new plan and a new program of rural procedure. The rural church should be informed, inspired and equipped to help in the rebuilding of rural America.

## II: RELIGION IN RURAL AMERICA

**T**HE rebuilding of rural America is of prime spiritual significance, not alone to rural life but to the cities and the nation. Rural people have been more naturally religious, and this fact has been evidenced in the interest and membership in the rural church.

Nearly three-quarters of all the churches in the United States are rural in character. To be sure, their average membership is somewhat lower than that of city churches, but more church members are engaged in agriculture than in any other industry. When we add to that number all those persons living in rural areas who are not actually engaged in agriculture, but in trades or occupations closely associated with agriculture, and also include those members of city churches who either grew up on the farm or came to the city from rural areas, we come easily and correctly to the conclusion that the churches of America are composed chiefly of rural-minded folk. And this condition has obtained throughout the history of Christianity in America.

There is a vital and universal bond between the

processes of agriculture and religious experience which we may well note before proceeding further to discuss our distinctively American problems. The Christian religion had its beginnings among agricultural and pastoral people accustomed to grain fields, flocks of sheep, herds of cattle, vineyards and sycamore trees. God works in the city as well as in the country, but it seems to be easier for man to see God in the fields, in the singing of a bird, in the setting of the sun or the rising of the moon, in the flowers and trees and in wild animal life, than in the complicated social and economic mechanism of a great city. Throughout history farmers have had their religions, their religious practices and their religious organizations. And if these today are imperiled in America by disintegrating forces, it is the business of the rural church to adjust itself to, and interpret, the best of the new conditions.

American civilization is racy of the soil upon which it came to fruitage. The first New England Thanksgiving Day was the expression of a profound conviction that, through the difficult months of the spring and summer, these early white settlers in a new country had been working with God. It was God who prepared the soil in which they dug and in which they buried their seeds. It was the ruggedness of that same soil, coupled with the God-given sunlight and moisture, which made growth possible. Through all those anxious, waiting days the entire

processes had been under a protection greater than man could bestow.

The emotions which stirred those early settlers in the making of that first crop are, in varying degree, the emotions which have for more than three hundred years stirred the American farmer. It is little wonder that the dwellers in rural America have been, in general, reverent and devout in spirit. Their religious faith has been one with their faith in nature. To those who know the heart of rural America it is clear that, even when hidden by uncouth exteriors and evil habits, the country people have possessed a genuine faith in religious realities. With neither the leisure nor the inclination for mysticism, they have been convinced of the basic truths of the Christian religion, even at those times when their lives have failed to manifest them. No people could have braved the dangers and difficulties of the American wilderness and converted so much of it into a rich garden without feeling that a divine Being was shaping their destiny on a great new continent that would become the home of a virile Christian nation.

Fortunately for those of us who believe that Jesus is the outstanding personality of all times, the greatest teacher of religious truth the world has seen, the revealer of the heart of God himself, and the Savior from sin and death, America was built by folk who called themselves Christians. Many of them came because of a definitely religious motive. The early

settlers brought with them the Christian Bible. They believed in the God whom Jesus came to reveal. They respected and admired Christian standards of life, even when they failed to attain them. In this new country they established the Christian church. It is easy in these days to laugh at the rigidity of Puritan ecclesiasticism, but it contributed something to America which possibly never before was used as a foundation for building a new civilization. It was a Christian way of living and working. We may change greatly in the future, but it is to be doubted whether we can sever the influences of those early days. Because of the Christian ethic there was an appreciation of right and wrong, a sense of duty and responsibility, a willingness to endure and a determination which entered into the very fiber of American life.

As the pioneers penetrated and cleared the wilderness and built their new homes they established their places of worship. The early American churches were centers of social life, but that was to a large extent incidental. Primarily, American churches were places where God's law was proclaimed. Jonathan Edwards' famous pulpit dissertation on "The sinner in the hands of an angry God" was but a slightly more dramatic presentation of the truth which was proclaimed from one end of the colonies to the other and as far into the forests as the white man's ax and gun had made it possible for him to advance.



In short, his religion was as realistic as the life about him.

One does not have to defend all the actions of those early American settlers to realize that, in spite of ignorance, hardship and deprivation, they had profound conceptions of the meaning and purpose of life, of the significance of death, and of the relation of man to the universe and the great mysteries of existence. Man was surrounded by vast natural forces which he was seeking by faith to conquer. The spread of settlements from the Atlantic to the Pacific is the story of the frontiersman's religion and church, the valor of the devoted men who, as preachers of the gospel, found their way to the remotest hamlets or actually led the way, as in the case of Jason Lee, Marcus Whitman and others, to the formation of new settlements. Nowhere else has such an amazing spread of population carried with it Christian concepts, Christian institutions, and Christian interpretations of life. Because of their rich Christian heritage the people of America find placed upon their shoulders a very special responsibility which they cannot well avoid. Surely it is fitting for them, possibly above others, to study carefully whether or not they have made the most of the spiritual as well as the material heritage which was bequeathed to them in those early days.

The history of American life is one of continuous change which is reflected in its religion and agricul-



ture. But as life became more settled and society better organized, so that one part of the country could, in time of crop failure, feed another, the sense of divine providence in crop production tended to lessen. Destruction of a single crop no longer meant death or suffering. Methods of production changed; the farmer gradually lost his intimate contact with the soil, until today many agricultural enterprises are conducted like factories. Automatic machinery has reduced the number of hours on the land, and that sense of a spiritual kinship, of mystic unity, with the land and the forces of nature which man has cherished for ages, has been directly affected. It is hardly to be believed that the farmer who spends his working hours at the controls of a tractor feels the same intimacy with the soil as did the farmer who dug his soil and planted his crops with simple instruments in his own hands. Today the church must revive that kinship and link it to spiritual interpretations of rural problems if religion expects to have a place in the new economy. Thus only will a new sense of dependence upon, and relationship with, the divine providence be kept alive.

**"THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S"**

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. . . . And God called the dry land Earth. . . . And God said, Let the earth bring forth grass, herbs yielding seed, and fruit-trees bearing fruit after

their kind, wherein is the seed thereof, upon the earth: and it was so. . . . And God saw that it was good." Thus begins the divine story of the earth in the first chapter of Genesis.

Says Dr. Liberty Hyde Bailey in his suggestive book:

If God created the earth, so is the earth hallowed; and if it is hallowed, so must we deal with it devotedly and with care that we do not despoil it, and mindful of our relations to all beings that live on it. We are to consider it religiously: Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.

If the earth is holy, then the things that grow out of the earth are also holy. They do not belong to man to do with them as he will. Dominion does not carry personal ownership. There are many generations of folk yet to come after us, who will have equal right with us to the products of the globe. It would seem that a divine obligation rests on every soul.<sup>1</sup>

It is this sense of stewardship of the land that is lost. We have wasted its riches prodigally, and now we are learning the bitter lesson of the prodigal. The great forests that a divine providence placed in nature's economy to play a conserving rôle have been destroyed by man's shortsighted and selfish economy. With no trees and vegetation to hold back the life-giving water, floods and winds have rendered useless the fertile soil which had been thousands of

<sup>1</sup> Bailey, L. H., *The Holy Earth*. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1917.

years in the making. The appalling results of erosion have been strikingly summarized in a recent survey:

The Soil Conservation Service and the National Resources Board both reported in 1936 on the serious ravages of erosion by wind and water. Nearly 160 million acres have lost all or most of their topsoil and are already entirely or nearly useless for cultivation. Over a half-billion more have lost from one-fourth to three-fourths of their topsoil; and the cultivated portion will be useless in time unless drastic steps are taken. All told, an area equal to about three-fourths of our present farm acreage has been affected. Only the Northeast among the regions has escaped the results of our prodigal soil mining.<sup>1</sup>

Economically these are startling facts, but when we take into account our stewardship and our responsibility to God the Creator as well as to future generations, the spiritual significance of the situation is clear. The very extent of God's goodness to us has been our undoing. So long as there was land farther west, we considered it right to exhaust and exploit. But now, having spent all, we come to be in want. We have forgotten the land and turned to the machine. We must learn once more that the land is the basis of life, that from its fruits we must live. All our technical knowledge and scientific methods of production will not compensate for the terrific loss of soil fertility.

<sup>1</sup> Reprinted from Brunner and Lorge, *Rural Trends in Depression Years*, p. 54. By permission of Columbia University Press.

A tragic story is told of a Western farmer gazing at the dust-laden sky and explaining that he was "just watching several farms go by." It is a parable of American agriculture and of a great social tragedy in our national life. We have become a generation of exploiters. We have taken out without putting back. We have removed the trees without providing windbreaks as one of nature's protections of the soil. We have cut down the trees and burned off the vegetation of our great watersheds. We have overgrazed our hill lands, leaving the top grass and the vegetation too thin to conserve the top soil. Farmers have kept certain hillside land constantly under the plow and have thus exposed the soil to the erosions of wind and rain. Today the American people are confronted with the problem of soil being washed away faster than new soils are being formed. Dr. Walter C. Lowdermilk of the Soil Conservation Service in Washington tells a typical parable.

The story of Ben James and his farm in Louisiana, which I recently visited, is similar to what has happened to great numbers of our farms. A few years ago, he was a prosperous farmer. He secured a Federal loan of one thousand dollars on his two hundred acre farm of gently sloping land. This was excellent security. Ben plowed his fields up and down the slopes so that each furrow was a potential gully. They grew in size—some twenty feet in depth. Gradually the fertility and topsoil washed off his place, leaving gullies and subsoil exposed.

When we visited his farm in January, 1935, we found

remnants of topsoil on about two acres; all the topsoil over the remainder of the farm had been swept away by accelerated erosion. Moreover, a system of gullies resembling an octopus with its many tentacles was eating out the heart of the farm. I asked what had become of all the material excavated by this gully system. We followed the train of the eroded material out onto the stream bottoms, being land of neighbors' farms, where we found that the formerly fertile bottom lands were covered over with the sterile outwash, in some places three feet deep.

But in addition to this, the drainage system had been choked up and the bottom had been transformed from a valuable farm to a willow marsh. The Ben James farm from which had come all this material could not now be sold for three hundred dollars. The farm is actually a menace to the community. But what of the owner? He was formerly a unit of society who produced more than he needed; accordingly, he was a consumer of the products of other elements in society; he was a contributor to the institutions of his community and state; now he is on the relief rolls at Federal expense.

Such is the story of many a mistreated and abandoned farm. We have sinned against God's holy earth through ignorance, selfishness and greed. Fortunately, a new day is dawning. We are waking to our unfaithful stewardship and our perils. Never did the church have a finer opportunity to proclaim the unescapable laws of God, and to bring us back to a sense of partnership with him in protecting, salvaging and remaking the holy earth which he placed in our keeping.

The Department of Agriculture is aroused to the situation. Information is being gathered and broadcast on soil erosion, the damage caused by floods and wind, the abuse of land by planting successive crops of cotton, tobacco, and other crops that eat the vitality out of the soil, leaving it to the mercy of the wind and rain. The conservation program aims to educate the people in the advantages of keeping soil productive, and in the peril that confronts a nation that allows its land to be depleted. Self-interest alone is beginning to dictate a more intelligent policy. Merchants and bankers as well as farmers are concerned with what is taking place. Many of these people have loaned money on land, and they are now discovering that a farm mortgage is only safe when the upper surface of the soil, which provides fertility for the plants, is protected. Recent studies have revealed that topsoil that has taken centuries to accumulate and develop has been removed in twenty to thirty years by soil erosion. What value is a farm mortgage when that has happened?

There is nothing really new in the consideration of this question of erosion. We are dealing with an ancient problem of civilized man. The oldest nations, such as China, have been grappling with the problem for centuries. In the rice-growing sections of the Philippines planters have been terracing for two thousand years as a means of preventing water erosion. We are not without some example and



warning in our own America. Over a century ago, in 1813, Thomas Jefferson, speaking of his farm in Virginia, gave the following information and advice that the present generation would do well to heed:

Our country is hilly and we have been in the habit of plowing in straight rows, whether up or down hill—and our soil was all rapidly running into the rivers. We now plow horizontally, following the curvature of the hills and hollows, on dead level. Every furrow thus acts as a reservoir to receive and retain the water, all of which goes to the benefit of the growing plant instead of running off into the stream.

To protect the soil against further erosion is the purpose of the Soil Conservation Service. Organized in 1933, it has, in a comparatively short space of time, succeeded in making thousands of American citizens land-conscious. After comprehensive surveys of the situation, it has instituted numerous erosion-prevention projects in all parts of the country, and is educating the farmers by cooperating with them to protect their farms against further devastation. It is also fostering service clubs in agricultural sections, which in turn are beginning to interest themselves in an educational program in the public schools to bring the subject before the children and young people. One Kiwanis Club in Georgia offered a prize of fifty dollars for the best essay on soil erosion written by children in the local school. Mr. F. C. Clayton

of the Department of Agriculture said in a recent speech: "To save the land is to save the people." That sentence deserves to be put in gold letters in every country school and every country church.

The social implications of this problem of a depleted soil, from the missionary point of view, are far-reaching. Much of the present missionary work among the underprivileged groups in rural areas is made necessary because of the serious physical and social degeneration that follows in the wake of impoverished soil. Thousands of people in these depleted soil areas are fighting a losing battle in wresting a livelihood from exhausted lands. Mission boards may well consider this whole question on its social side, and launch out in some cooperative venture with those agencies that are now seeking to rehabilitate these people, or, where possible, to recover and conserve the fertility of the soil.

There was a time when the church held a lofty ideal of the land, asserting that the earth was holy, that it was God's creation. Thus the land was once governed and controlled by God's visible and acknowledged agent, the church. For centuries land in many countries was held by the church. It is not necessary to dwell upon the tragic story of what happened when the church abused its sacred trust. The consequent revolts of the common people, led in England by men like John Ball and John Wycliffe,



were essentially movements to place the land under the control of the crown.

It is good, however, to remind ourselves of a time when this basic sense of responsibility and reverence for the land was deeply ingrained in the consciousness of the church and formed a part of its program. That the church no longer has control over the land is no excuse for its lack of vital interest in it. In this we are pleading for something of infinitely greater importance than an intrinsic or utilitarian interest. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." The church has a responsibility to keep before its people the sacred trust that is involved in the stewardship of the soil. Country churches should call their farmer members to join in the crusade for recovery. And city churches can, through the proclamation of the basic truths as related to agriculture, be of great assistance to their country brethren.

#### CORPORATION FARMING

These losses involve social and religious values in American rural life, and are aggravated by an economic menace—corporation farming. Nor is corporation or large-scale financial control confined to the soil; it now seeks to control the products of the soil. This evil is already evident in the milk and dairy business. Such a control of rural affairs is of profound significance for the future. The trend to

the mass production of corporation farms has been particularly noticeable in the wheat-growing sections of the country. American farmers in these states are now protesting the corporation-owned farm and the developing chain farms, and are mobilizing to combat this new development. They view it as an octopus of Wall Street. They see in it the end of the farm home. They see the gigantic tractors and other forms of machinery driving them and their families from the land, and crushing the enterprises on which they have spent the best years of their lives.

This opposition to the corporation farm is crystallizing in the councils of the political parties and in their platforms. In Kansas the maintenance of the family-sized, family-owned farm, as against the developing corporation-owned farm, became a political issue several years ago. Other states have since taken up the issue and bills have been introduced to block the development of corporation farming. Kansas has already passed legislation that prohibits the granting of charters to farming corporations, and has directed the attorney general of the state to file ouster suits against such corporations as are now operating. A presidential candidate recently assured the nation that farming "must continue to be an individual business of small units and independent ownership." Senator Arthur Capper has declared that

corporation farming is a bad public policy. It is dangerous. I am strongly opposed to it. Every farmer and every

business man in rural America and every worker in the big industrial centers should oppose it. I feel that we are justified by the facts as known, and the possibilities of the future as indicated by those facts, in using every proper means to nip this corporate farming development before it gets firmly established.

The experience of such institutions as the church and school in these corporation farm areas is a sad one. With their farmer constituents they have suffered from the dislocation of their traditional social and religious loyalties. Communities cannot be developed around transient, part-time labor. Institutions of learning and of moral and spiritual development have little chance to establish themselves and become vital factors except in communities long settled by farming families. Where corporation farms develop, farm homes and families decline, and those who remain become serfs unable to support these community institutions. This is today the condition of the depressed share croppers.

The farm owned and operated by the family has deep spiritual implications that the church dare not ignore. Large-scale farming should be opposed on national grounds, not only because it destroys the livelihood of millions of farm people, but also because it undermines that bulwark of American rural life, the home. Said the editor of a Kansas farm paper recently:

The maintenance of a family the year around by the

individual farmer is not the overhead of farming. It is the overhead of civilization. Replace individual farmers with floating farm hands employed for a few months in the year and you might just as well nail shut the doors of the churches and the institutions of learning. Individual farmers, not floating farm hands, rear children and give opportunities for scholastic education.

If the present trend toward corporation and chain farming continues, it will create a social revolution catastrophic in its consequences to agriculture and rural life. Industrialized agriculture will destroy the family-type farm, further uprooting the American families from the soil. It will obliterate rural skills and traditions. Under corporation farming it is quite possible that the present farm population will be replaced by people not now engaged in agriculture. It will inevitably mean the reduction of the population in the wheat, cotton and corn territory, and the passing of the rural homestead in these areas. It will bring new social and educational problems and create further class consciousness and prejudice.

In the last analysis this is a very human problem. What will it avail us to increase our productive capacity if, in the process, we create conditions that make rural life less worthy? The farmer is more important than the farm, and corporation farming must ultimately be appraised by the harm it does to our rural population. To enable the farm families to remain upon the farm and to continue to possess the

land that they are called upon to till, seems at the moment to be one of the worthy objectives to which the church can devote its energies in the days that are ahead.

#### CHEMISTRY AND AGRICULTURE

If one were to believe the radiant reports of the success of chemical agriculture and the prophecies made in its name, one might conclude that the American people are now about ready to dispense with the soil altogether. Stories are current of the large-scale production of tomatoes and other vegetables, without soil and under glass. The use of sawdust, instead of soil, and of fertilizing chemicals, has resulted in a prodigious production to the square yard as compared with the labor of raising similar crops outdoors in the soil.

That there are possibilities for the raising of certain vegetables on an intensive basis of production is now an established fact. But as to the value and possibilities of the wider application of such methods to agriculture in general, there is grave doubt. The problem of where the sawdust and chemicals for this new type of agriculture are to come from, staggers the imagination. One can hardly conceive of millions of acres of corn, wheat, potatoes, hay, cotton, tobacco, and the other products of the farm that bulk so large in the totals of agriculture, being produced under such conditions. For a long time to

come, the average person will continue to eat fruit and vegetables that have received their sustenance from the earth, and have been nourished by nature's rain and sunshine. I have a suspicion that "while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest shall not fail," and that for most of us it will be necessary that someone shall plow the earth and plant the seed, cultivate the crops and reap the harvest.

At least, so far as the present generation is concerned, this method of production will continue. American agriculture is in no immediate peril of a widespread substitution of chemical agriculture. Nor will the products of city chemical factories replace the products of poultry and dairy farms. Yet it would likewise be foolish to deny the possibility that just that sort of change may some day take place.

#### FARMING AS A WAY OF LIFE

Is farming to follow a commercial standard and be carried on primarily for financial profit, or can it be made a way of life satisfying to the souls of a rural people and yielding to them enough of the bounties of nature and factory products to make living rich and joyful? In other words, can those who find their destiny on the land work it out there? We are convinced that farming must be made again a satisfying mode of life. If we are interested in spiritual values, and believe that it is possible to develop a rural civilization based upon an agriculture that is

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rich, complete and satisfying for the many families who engage in it, we must think out ways and means to re-create agriculture on this basis.

We must frankly face those materialistic conceptions of agriculture that are based upon a ruthless exploitation of soil and human energy, and combat them with a more intelligent religious philosophy. If the soil must be enriched, so must the life of the farmer. The farm is not primarily a place to make money but a place to live. Its equilibrium of economic, social and religious forces must not be at the mercy of unruly profit-serving forces whose pressure disturbs its balance. The church must help to resist these disturbing forces and their fickle, unreasonable demands.

I believe that a majority of American farm people would respond to this philosophy of farm life. There are still farmers who love the farm as a place to live, and agriculture as a mode of making a living. All they ask is a reasonable return for their toil, with values that are fairly stable and that will enable them to live decently and humanly. But the unpredictable and irrational pressure put upon them and their output by a strictly commercial market, which is often manipulated to their economic, social and spiritual detriment, is a menace that must be faced. For these economic raids upon the farmer's life, which are too often aggravated by natural disasters, make for insecurity. His home and his family, his



social and religious life are an inseparable part of farming, in a way that is not true of any other business. For the normal farmer, his home and his place of business are one, and, in spite of complaining, he will not desert the farm for the city unless he is driven away by forces over which he and the state and government have no control. Intimately involved in this problem is the rural church which ministers to his peculiar needs. It is an institution which is as precious as the soil itself.

Farm people in general are poor people. Improvements are taking place, but after all has been done that can be done and ought to be done, farm people still will never be rich, as wealth is counted in the social scale. Honest poverty was a basic pattern of the rural life of yesterday. Pioneer farmers accepted poverty with magnificent courage, but there were compensating values for the individual, the community and the nation. Charles Morrow Wilson has done justice to this rural economy:

In the proven ways of country living, men belong to the land far more convincingly than land belongs to men. Economically as well as socially, the good yeoman is bound to the earth which he tills, and from which he takes the goods of life. His farm is a vital part of its community. . . . Community government, like countryside living, still rests upon a foundation of frontier neighborliness. Local citizens must help local citizens in times of need—help neighbors to stand against the ravages of fire, storm, flood, sickness or death. Local citizens



must meet unpaid civic duties. This presupposes year-round residence, permanence of establishment, concentration of interest and presence in the home community.<sup>1</sup>

Such is the picture of rural life of yesterday, a thing of "neighborships"—a fellow feeling growing out of common experiences and common responsibilities. How shall these neighborships, that cluster about and support the rural church, survive? Is it possible to conserve the vital elements of community interest and responsibility in the new and altered situations? Rural life has called forth qualities both moral and spiritual that are distinct and unique. Experience has proved that these qualities have a definite social value which has not been fully understood. In the pioneer period these qualities vitally contributed to the founding of the republic and the shaping of the nation's life. The leaders in nearly every realm of interest sprang from the rural social order of that pioneer agriculture. And the nation cannot do without this precious reservoir of strength. This contribution of rural life to social progress was obscured by the industrial age; it has not been thoroughly appraised or fully appreciated.

Isolation had its influence. It also had its obstacles and difficulties, but it produced qualities of mind that have played a significant part in coloring our entire social structure. The most subtle of these quali-

<sup>1</sup> Wilson, Charles Morrow, *The Roots of America*. New York, Funk and Wagnalls, 1936.

ties was the habit of contemplation and reflection which endowed the farmer with that resourcefulness admired by city folk. Nature provides an atmosphere and opportunity in which intellectual speculation and contemplative habits are developed. The rural mind is capable of logical reasoning, deep thinking and high ideals. This isolation and environment have also helped to develop creative imagination and a philosophical habit that are of tremendous social value. These are the qualities that account for the contribution to public service that has been made by rural people even after they have moved to the city. Thomas Jefferson said on one occasion: "Cultivators of earth make the best citizens. They are the most virtuous, and the most independent. They are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests with the most lasting bonds. As long, therefore, as they can find employment in that line, I would not counsel them to be mariners, artisans, or anything else."

The rural church is the focal point of these qualities and characteristics. It has made them tangible to the farmer, given them expression and direction. Thus the destiny of the rural church is one with that of the farmer. It is bound up with the future of agriculture, and makes its quiet but definite contribution to the social, moral and spiritual life of the nation. The city civilization is not wholly self-sufficing; it derives strength from the country that surrounds and

feeds it. This is not merely a physical consideration; it is a spiritual matter. It is the rôle of the rural church to keep alive in the hearts and minds of people this sense of the place of agriculture in the life of the nation. Above all should the church enable farm people to see in the daily rounds and common tasks of agriculture a road that may lead them daily nearer to God.

### III: THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT AND RURAL LIFE

**I**N rebuilding rural America we must give serious consideration to the economic life of the rural people and the dislocations it has suffered. The American farm problem has been growing steadily worse since the World War. American agriculture was rapidly developed to supply a world market, and during the World War the process was speeded up. There was a great new demand for food and raw materials. When the war ended, this artificial market collapsed, and the American farmer found himself able to produce more food and raw materials than he could dispose of.

Besides facing the problem of surplus products, rural economy is seriously disturbed by scientific agriculture. New technological methods in industry were designed to increase production, but at the same time they have thrown millions of workers out of employment and crippled their power to buy what the farmer produced. How to readjust our economic life on a stable basis of supply and demand is the national problem. The American farmer is now re-

stricted to a domestic market, and when the unemployment of millions of consumers of farm products partially paralyzes that market, he is the ultimate victim.

Many and varied are the schemes being tried to meet these baffling problems of our economic life. During recent years the government has sent to this task an army of specialists, but in the end the farmer must solve his own economic problems.

Creating scarcity on an artificial basis so that the supply of food shall be limited to the purchasing power of the masses is only a temporary expedient. We must find a way to move into a plenty economy. The present economic system is so arranged that the money flows into the hands of a few people who live in the cities. This is the crux of the economic problem of the American farmer.

In all too many rural sections the people are poor and in debt because they are sending out much more than they receive in compensation. There is an annual drain that has made impoverishment inevitable. No people can be strong and healthy unless they are able to balance their income with their outgo. In self-protection rural people are beginning to organize cooperatives to meet their economic problems. They are discovering that it is possible through the cooperatives to balance the budget, to prevent the cities from constantly draining the country.

## WHAT IS A COOPERATIVE?

A cooperative is an organization of individuals who agree to work together for the purpose of producing, manufacturing, transporting, purchasing and marketing the things they need. Such organizations may also provide insurance, personal credit, health and funeral service. It is not the purpose of cooperatives to produce for the competitive market, but, by mutual aid, to secure legitimate compensation for goods produced and service rendered. Cooperatives are not interested in profits, but in service and mutual benefits.

The cooperative movement has been tested and tried under the most difficult and adverse conditions, and it has more than proved its value as an economic method of production and distribution. Established more than ninety years ago in Rochdale, England, by twenty-eight unemployed mill hands, it has passed the experimental stage, and has now become one of the most formidable influences in British economic life, doing the largest business in the British Isles. It has spread until today it is operating in forty countries and has a membership of more than 100,000,000.

There are three basic principles upon which the cooperative movement is founded:

1. *Liberty for all.* Membership is open to all persons regardless of race or creed. There is no voting by proxy,

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and each person has but one vote irrespective of the amount of stock owned.

2. *Security for all.* Economic brotherhood should mean security for all. Capital invested in the movement receives only the current rate of interest and does not share in the earnings beyond this amount.

3. *Justice for all.* Economic brotherhood should mean justice for all. All earnings over and above the amount required to pay the operating costs are paid back to the members in proportion to their purchases. In this way the piling up of profits in the hands of a few people is prevented.

These are the three principles upon which the Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers established the cooperative movement. This economic system they believed would create peace, plenty and happiness for every one, everywhere.

Not only Great Britain and Denmark, but Norway, Sweden and Switzerland have given wonderful demonstrations of the cooperatives as a way out for the farmers. In more recent years countries like South Africa, India and Japan have been experimenting with the cooperatives as a method to establish a more abundant life for the masses, and in particular for the rural people. The three outstanding Christian leaders of our generation, Dr. Albert Schweitzer, Dr. E. Stanley Jones and Dr. Toyohiko Kagawa, have given eloquent testimony as to the value of the cooperatives as the Christian way out of our economic dilemma, and a method whereby rural



people can secure an economic foundation for a strong, self-supporting and self-respecting rural life.

Dr. E. Stanley Jones of India, when in the United States on the National Preaching Mission of 1936, stated clearly and emphatically the situation that confronts the Christian church at the present moment.

We must give the kingdom of God on earth as a head-on and sweeping answer to the world's need, and we must do it without compromise and without apology. But to do so will require that we must apply it to the economic and social order to be adequate for this hour. For the economic is the present nerve center of our problems. The church can help by developing the cooperative spirit instead of the competitive, by organizing cooperatives of various types and kinds.

On his visit to the United States in 1936 Toyohiko Kagawa made the following plea:

I plead for the Christian conscience to infuse the cooperative movement and to create a society based on mutual aid and humanitarian motives. The Rochdale principles have been tested for more than ninety years, and have been found to be successful. Christianity has the wonderful law of the Golden Rule and the Sermon on the Mount. It is based on mutual service. The principle of the cross is the basic principle of reconstruction in economics. . . . How shall Christianity change the economic system? Through cooperatives, which are the love principle in action.

Kagawa believes that religion cannot be separated



from the basic processes of making a living. He insists that one cannot keep the Christian religion and economic life in separate water-tight compartments. He has established the cooperative movement in Japan as an instrument for realizing the kingdom of heaven upon earth.

He calls the cooperative plan an "economic theology," and insists that Christian people ought to understand it and prepare themselves to introduce it into their economic structure. He advocates the cooperative principle as the alternative to the many dangerous nostrums that are being put forward as cures for our economic distress. He says that it is the only answer to communism, which is unable to cure our economic ills because it is fundamentally materialistic. The cooperative movement, he insists, when it is rooted and grounded in love and brotherhood, is unquestionably Christian and is calculated to usher in a new era, a Christian economic democracy that will be an effective expression of the kingdom of God on earth.

If Kagawa is correct in his thinking—and we believe that he is—then such a program of economic democracy, with all its spiritual implications, must receive the attention of the Christian church. In the field of the town and country church there are definite and clear obligations arising from the needs of rural society to find a way out of its present difficulties.

## WHO GETS THE PROFITS?

Before discussing the philosophy and practice of cooperation, let us consider some of the factors which make the life of the farmer a difficult one. Let us take the important dairy industry, although the same principles apply to other basic agricultural commodities.

One dairy products corporation has assets of \$191,375,434, of which \$22,391,853 is "good-will"; but it draws a dividend just the same. At the end of 1934 it had cash on hand amounting to \$21,721,488. That year, after charging off \$16,000,000 for depreciation and repairs, it made a net profit of \$6,551,930, according to the report of its board of directors. And it did this after paying extravagant salaries. In 1933, the worst year of the depression, when farmers were up against a poverty situation and bankruptcy, the president of this company received a salary of \$168,000 which, with other compensations, brought his total remuneration to \$171,099. The thirty-six directors and officers, not including the president, received as salary and other compensations the amazing sum of \$930,266. Thus more than \$1,000,000 was paid to thirty-seven persons for a year's service, and some of it only part-time service. All of that had to be taken out of the returns to an impoverished group of farmers who found the prices of their produce arbitrarily arranged because of a desperate competition fostered by the conditions of a monopoly control of distribu-

tion. Another well known dairy products company provides a good illustration of the monopoly that exists. In 1932 it paid total salaries of \$653,895, to twenty-six officers, of which the president received \$108,350. Nor is the producer farmer the only victim. In the great cities, where the children of the poorer classes are dependent upon a supply of good milk, prices were demanded by the retailing monopolist companies that led the state and city of New York to protect the consumer.

Is it any wonder that there is a rural problem, and that the United States government is called upon to subsidize the farmer? It is to eliminate this waste, extravagance and extortion that rural cooperatives are being established. Farmers as producers and consumers must join hands with the industrial workers, who are also producers and consumers, to bridge the gulf between production and consumption. They can cooperate to render their own services in these consumer commodities and bring to an end the present evils.

#### THE GROWTH OF COOPERATION IN RURAL AMERICA

Today it is estimated that some two million American farmers are members of one or more cooperative organizations, and the extension of these movements goes forward at a rapid pace. Feed, fertilizer, seed, oil and gas, automobile and life insurance, groceries and dry goods are the major items of cooperative

business. There is a tremendous swing toward the cooperative method among the farmers who are raising cattle. During 1935-36 the volume of the farmers' cooperative livestock marketing associations showed a rise of \$75,000,000 over the previous marketing season. This was brought about through larger membership and more thorough application of the cooperative principles.

America is just beginning to get the meaning and importance of this cooperative movement. There are already five hundred consumer stores, fifteen hundred oil and petroleum products societies, nine hundred mutual aid societies, one cooperative mail order house, and buying clubs that are increasing rapidly in number. To cite but one illustration of the development that is taking place, the Central Cooperative Wholesale of Superior, Wisconsin, was organized in 1917, and during that year did a business of \$25,573.62. The total sales in 1935 were about \$2,000,000. The problem now is to keep the movement going over the difficult period of experimentation and expansion; to influence the interested people not to yield to the sinister temptations they will meet, but to stick to their cooperative until it has had a fair chance to establish itself on a sure foundation.

In one year over 600,000 farmers and stockmen marketed \$250,000,000 worth of livestock through these cooperatives. More than 1,000,000 animals were handled by the largest cooperative terminal market,

and over 900,000 by another cooperative agency. More than half the farmers belonging to these cooperatives are in Minnesota, Illinois, Missouri, Iowa and Ohio. The 110 associations in Illinois made the best showing, marketing animals valued at \$60,000,000. The cooperative method is well established in the marketing end of agricultural products of many sorts; its extension to the production side of agriculture and to the consumer interests is the next step.

A recent article in *Rural America* says that in the South, where the sharecroppers' miserable condition has aroused the national conscience, "land is concentrated in the hands of corporations, banks, and plantation owners, thereby forcing whole sections of the South into domains of absentee landlordism."<sup>1</sup>

The experiment of Dr. Sherwood Eddy and the Rust brothers in developing a cooperative farm program for the sharecroppers of the South is illustrative. Early in 1936 Dr. Eddy became interested through the eviction of twenty-four sharecropper families in northeastern Arkansas. He sent his friend, the Reverend Sam Franklin, a native of Tennessee and a former missionary in Japan, to investigate. Shortly after Franklin's arrival he wired to Sherwood Eddy to come down and see the situation for himself. Dr. Eddy found peonage, serfdom, poverty, disease, and sometimes terror and violence. He was locked up by the deputy sheriffs and threatened with violence after

<sup>1</sup> *Rural America*, January, 1937.

talking to a group of sharecroppers whose families had been evicted in a blizzard because they tried to organize to secure better conditions.

Out of this visit grew the cooperative farm idea as the only practical Christian way out for the people involved in this economic distress. Across the Mississippi River, and away from the Arkansas area where they had experienced their trouble, a tract of land, 2,138 acres in extent, was secured and 600 acres were under cultivation by the end of the year. This marked the beginning of an attempt to solve the problem of these dispossessed, unemployed sharecroppers. Fifty families were selected from among the evicted. Temporary houses were built. Crops were planted cooperatively. Existing buildings were remodeled for joint use as school, church and store. A modern water supply, dairy herd, hogs, poultry and other equipment are either already supplied or under contemplation. It is too soon to tell the full story or to predict the outcome, but already the plan is creating a new self-respecting manhood and bringing opportunity into the lives of many who before were in the depths of human despondency.

Churches and preachers all over the country are leading in this cooperative movement. A recent rural project is that of Plainfield, Vermont. This is the parish made famous by the long and unique ministry of the Reverend Arthur Wentworth Hewitt, author of *Steeple among the Hills*, one of the best books on

rural education ever written. Upon Dr. Hewitt's resignation in 1934 the Reverend Raymond V. Ebbett succeeded him. In the outlying village of Adamant he discovered that the economic situation was such that something was immediately necessary to meet the economic needs. The only store was about to close, and with it would probably go the post office. So Mr. Ebbett called together a group of interested citizens to study the cooperative movement. The result was the organization of a cooperative store that completed its first year of business on July 31, 1936.

The community of Adamant is very limited in population, and it will be necessary to include a larger circle than the immediate village to enable a cooperative to do its best work. But, in spite of limitations and obstacles, the cooperative did a business the first year of over \$8,000. It followed closely the Rochdale plan, buying from the nearest wholesaler and selling at current retail prices. It provided delivery service twice a week. There has been a gradual increase in business each month as the farmers in the nearby territory have become interested. The venture has excited much interest and comment in the surrounding territory. Many of the people predicted that it could not continue. That it has survived a full year, and is still growing, is a matter of surprise to many and of concern to others. The experiment has demonstrated that the cooperative plan



is workable, even in a small place; that it can survive when private business cannot afford to carry on. The members of this cooperative are more thoroughly interested and committed to the cooperative ideal than ever. The following story of the development is told by the pastor who was responsible for the initial leadership:

You may like to know how we got going. I held discussion groups in the various homes during the winter of 1934 and 1935. Enough interest was stirred up so that ten families were willing to form a cooperative buying club the following April. Each family put in five dollars to make up a purchasing fund. I conducted the club personally and delivered the goods in my car each Monday. I ran the club for three months. Then we voted to go further, incorporate and buy out the little store that was about ready to fold up in Adamant. If this store had closed there was danger that the post office would be discontinued. There was not business enough for a private enterprise to succeed. All agreed that a cooperative enterprise was the only kind of project that could survive in that location, and all wanted to keep the post office. So there was a special reason for their willingness to try out the venture.

Regarding the practical lessons learned by trial and error, Mr. Ebbett says that there are certain things to be avoided, especially since local conditions largely influence the method of approach. Perhaps the best advice he offers is that careful preparation be made by study groups.



I feel now that in general it would not be wise to begin with a cooperative store. That is a rather advanced and complicated cooperative effort, calling for a high degree of group loyalty which needs to be cultivated over a considerable period. I think the cooperative credit union is a much easier and safer project to begin with. And I am convinced that no cooperative program can succeed in a very large or permanent way unless study groups are constantly maintained among the membership. I want to get my whole parish organized in study groups with laymen as leaders. Given these study groups, meeting regularly for concerted study on cooperative principles and projects, and the call for experiment is sure to arise. Without them, I doubt if any experiment can long be maintained.

We have organized the Plainfield Vermont Federal Credit Union, the second Protestant parish credit union in the state. It now has twenty members with a capital of about \$140. We are now at the point where we can invite applications for small loans. I expect to give some time to promoting this during the coming year. The best men in the community are interested in it and seem ready to back it. With two or three years of successful operation of a credit union it would be much easier to work up an interest in a cooperative store venture. So here in Plainfield I am going to try to build slowly upon a broad and solid foundation.

I am definitely and thoroughly committed to the cooperative movement as a part of the rural church program. It is in the rural church that the relation between personal religion and social cooperation can be best demonstrated.

One of the best illustrations of what the church

can do in the practical development of cooperatives comes from Antigonish, Nova Scotia. In 1919 the National Catholic Welfare Conference published the following paragraph in the "Bishop's Program for Social Reconstruction":

More important and more effective than any government regulation of prices should be the establishment of cooperative stores. The enormous toll taken from industry by the various classes of middlemen is now fully realized. The astonishing difference between the price received by the producer and that paid by the consumer has become a scandal of our industrial system. The obvious and direct means of reducing this discrepancy and abolishing unnecessary middlemen is the operation of retail and wholesale mercantile concerns under the ownership and management of the consumer.

This was the clarion call to action for the priests of St. Francis Xavier in Antigonish, and they have demonstrated that the poor working people, fishermen, miners and farmers can become articulate and achieve for themselves collectively what they utterly failed to achieve individually. They took an inventory of the social values of their province and found it bankrupt, with a decline of population and a constant lowering of the standard of living for the majority of those who remained. They found the cost of living was higher in Nova Scotia than in any other Canadian province and the per capita buying power was lower. They found this was particularly true in the case of the poor fishermen and farmers.

From this point they proceeded on the theory that the best way to secure results was to build the people into fit instruments to achieve an ideal. They acted upon the assumption that the common people had the brains to do the things that are necessary. On such principles they organized cooperative study clubs, buying clubs, and marketing groups. They prepared literature that gave the educational techniques to be followed. The result is that the province of Nova Scotia has had its whole economic life revolutionized by a program of cooperatives that were intended primarily to meet the needs of the underprivileged fishermen and farmers. Lobster plants, fish processing plants, creameries, sawmills, stores and other projects have been organized cooperatively. There are seventeen cooperative lobster and fish factories. The following illustration comes from the village of Dover in eastern Nova Scotia and is given by Dr. Francis Beck of the staff of the American Association for Adult Education.

This tiny fishing community was composed of fifty-five families, poor and simple folk. In 1929, they joined the organization of fishermen, a need passionately advocated by the educational missionaries. In 1931 they went to the woods and hauled out to their boats—by hand, since they had no horses—the lumber for a new lobster factory. They built a wharf and factory, and were ready for the spring operations of 1932. When the banks refused them credit, they obtained the money needed for equipment from a few good friends. In the first year

their profits amounted to \$4,000. With this money, they paid off the whole of their debt, and they shared as a bonus what was left. But they did not stop with the lobster factory; having no milk for their children, they bought goats. Later they built cooperatively two large and seaworthy boats. They next opened a school for men and women, and twenty of their number learned to read and write. The women have taken up handicrafts; illiteracy has vanished.

Through cooperative buying these workers save four dollars on a single fishing net, five cents a pound on rope, four cents a pound on nails, fifteen cents a bushel on potatoes. They have developed cooperative truck gardens and are raising a variety of vegetables, thus providing for their own tables food that was formerly considered a luxury. Through their lobster cooperatives they have obtained an additional two cents a pound for their lobsters. This story of little Dover could also be told of numerous other small fishing villages along the coast. Poverty, illiteracy and cruel social injustices are disappearing because these hapless victims of a system of exploitation once in the control of a few unprincipled men have been taught to use their strength through cooperation to protect themselves. This, to me, is a clear example of what the church could do if it would take seriously the question of its responsibility to the masses of underprivileged people and develop some program of social action through the cooperatives. Such a pro-

gram and strategy calls for a new church statesmanship.

### THE PLACE OF THE CHURCH

How may a rural church and its pastor participate in the cooperative movement, and what is their specific function in this field? It should be readily acknowledged that their major task is education, providing means by which the parishioners shall be thoroughly informed as to present-day economic movements, and, in particular, stressing those that give concrete expression to the moral and spiritual standards that are implicit in the life and teachings of Jesus.

"The church forgot the poor, and finally the poor forgot the church." That was the reason given by a priest in Spain for the recent revolution. When the church fails to deal with the problem of poverty and distress it will die, for its life and interests are identical with those of its people. Since 1920 American farmers have wrestled with economic depression. They have been forced to do something to help themselves. After many difficult and discouraging experiences they are turning toward cooperation. And the church, which is essentially a cooperative institution, cannot fail to respond. The church must help them to realize its spiritual values in their new movement toward cooperative effort. Since cooperatives call for a maximum of moral and spiritual ideal-

ism, they offer to the church a supreme opportunity for guidance. To hold up the ideals of loyalty and brotherhood in mutual help, to keep before the farmers the Christian ethic as a basis of cooperation, to assist in developing an economic democracy in our farm areas—these are the opportunities before the church, and it must be ready with a program that will inspire the cooperative movement.

Perhaps the greatest need in cooperation lies in developing socialized individuals—people who can adapt themselves to a changing world, who are open to ideas, and who are seeking a better way to live and work with others. As an old Negro once said: "We must learn to cooperate with the inevitable." The spirit of cooperation is the important thing. All the programs of practical procedure will fail unless this spirit gives the dominating influence, the driving motive.

This spirit of cooperation should begin at home—in planning the work of the farm and the farm home, to relieve it of its tedium and drudgery. For we have come to realize that the child who is given a chance to help in planning for the good of the family is happier and more capable than the one whose responsibility is limited to securing selfish satisfactions for himself or carrying out the decisions of his elders. As a rule, farm children, from necessity, are cooperative, and more so than urban children; but to make their cooperation more constructive and less repetitive, the



church should plan programs in which its ideals and fellowship, its gospel of service, can put meaning into the daily chores. This home experience also forms the basis for the larger cooperative endeavors of life, which are essential. We need to develop the cooperative spirit in our endeavors for the common good of agricultural life. Democracy lacks meaning without this spirit of cooperation. Political democracy must have the foundations of economic and social democracy. This cooperative spirit can best be generated in the farm family, around the table and by the family hearthstone and among neighbors preparing community programs and interested in the outcome of common projects. In every phase of this program of education and spiritual development the church must lead.

Of course, there are many sides to this question of the place that the church should take in the cooperative movement. The ethical problem of a minister who receives part of his salary from small merchants and others conducting private or corporate business, and who at the same time sponsors the cooperative movement, is difficult. But the cooperatives are just as necessary to the interests of the small merchant and producer as to those of the consumer. The small merchant and individual producer are being forced out by the chain systems and big monopolies, and the cooperative may enlist them and benefit by their business experience. The future of small town

and country business is such as to warrant the most careful consideration and sympathy from the cooperative point of view. The church and the preacher can take the lead in enlisting the cooperation of local business men and showing them that community interests are really one, that together they stand or fall. But it will require wise and diplomatic procedure, which at every turn should be based upon the essence of the Christian spirit, understanding and tolerance.

#### THE MISSIONARY VALUE

There is another significant value in the cooperatives that should be given careful consideration by the church. This has to do with those sections of rural America generally spoken of as the retarded areas, where missionary aid has long been required. The primary problem in these areas is that of poverty. The people lack the resources to enable them to secure those advantages of education, health, religion and culture that go with the more favored communities where economic resources have been better developed. Unless their standards of living and working are raised they can never share equally in anything, much less initiate cooperatives. That the church should continue to serve these groups is assumed, but the future method of that service is of importance. Unless the church has kept pace with the spirit of the time, with the new social and eco-



conomic techniques, its cooperation and leadership will be negligible.

Undoubtedly the time has arrived for the launching of a more vigorous program of economic improvement in these groups that missions are attempting to guide into a fuller life. Preventive missions may be more important and more really Christian than remedial missions. To help people to help themselves is a greater and more constructive Christian service than to continue to provide help. But this calls for a program, a broad fundamental policy, a recruitment of forces, the aid of technical advisers. Foreign missions have made progress along this line. The gospel of the plow as an integral part of the gospel of Jesus Christ, is now making possible the more abundant life to the outcaste and underfed peoples on the foreign mission field. This practical and progressive program can be of equal service to the needy areas of rural America. But to achieve its full purpose will require the genius and organization of the cooperatives, and, at the center of these movements, the church.

Mountain people, Negroes, Indians, migrant workers, rural mining groups and sharecroppers are in great need of the kind of help that the cooperative movement could bring them; and because of their isolation and their peculiar needs they are ideal groups among which to start cooperatives. The mission boards working in this field with the local churches

might render invaluable service to these special groups through a program of cooperative development. It might be of the self-help, production-for-use type. For a long time these peoples will need for themselves much of what they can produce. Any margin obtained could be exchanged for commodities produced outside, and for enough money to meet certain obligations that must be paid in cash. But the important value would be a greater measure of self-support and consequent self-development and self-respect. There is real peril in the continuation of mission patronage without any attempt toward larger self-support. The success of missionary projects must often be measured by the gradual and ultimate elimination of missionary aid. Toward this goal the missionary agencies operating in these needy rural areas should strive. Already data on the success of rehabilitation work among sharecroppers are available, and should be useful in facing this problem.

Cooperatives might well be made a first consideration in the program of rural missionary work. There is no one of these needy groups that could not be helped to a more vital and abundant economic life, looking toward the goal of self-support, if they could be organized upon the basis of the cooperatives.

#### FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

American rural life is in a state of rapid flux. While the trend of population from city to country still

continues, any sign of recovery reverses the flow, and sudden dislocations work havoc, leaving problems behind them. Many rural dwellers are in economic distress. Rural community life is weakening, and many rural institutions are disintegrating. It may well be that cooperation has come to America for such a time as this to assist migrants from the city to a production-for-use agriculture; to help poverty-stricken farmers to a fairer share of the ultimate price of their own products, and to protect them in the purchase of life's necessities; to restore vitality to community life and to help in the rehabilitation of rural institutions.

Cooperation was born in England among the poor and in time of crisis. Denmark has demonstrated the possibilities that await a rural people who will face their problems on a cooperative basis. Fifty years ago a backward and barren country, she has lifted herself until today she is recognized as one of the world's outstanding examples of rural progress. It may be that the cooperative movement will lead rural America without bloodshed, violence or revolution to a new and better day.

Cooperation is on the way. There is danger that the movement will develop without a spiritual and truly altruistic motive. The church, which is the best example of cooperation, must see to it that the movement is inspired with the spirit of Christian fellowship. In the journal of the National Education Asso-

ciation, Joy Elmer Morgan gives us the essence of cooperation:

The cooperative movement is of the people, by the people, and for the people. It serves every type of human need, both economic and cultural. It thrives in every country where freedom is not entirely destroyed. It removes the cause of war and of internal strife. To a world disheartened by unemployment and torn by war, it offers a peaceful pathway toward a better civilization. The cooperative movement gives people a sense of responsibility for their own destinies. It is a most powerful form of education; people learn by doing; they develop faith in themselves and in each other. The cooperative movement is the practical application of the Golden Rule; it is the ultimate democracy.

#### IV: FORWARD TOGETHER

**I**F rural churches are to lead farmers in the co-operative path, they must learn to practise cooperation in their own corporate life, for a situation now exists in rural America which demands a rallying and unifying of Christian forces.

It is sometimes said that the rural churches of America grew up like Topsy, without rhyme or reason, but we suspect that even in the case of Topsy there was much of both rhyme and reason. Certainly the rural churches of America did not "just happen." They were the inevitable and legitimate result of very definite forces. Today students of rural life are perplexed to understand why certain churches came into existence at all and why they were built at the particular places where they were built. Had those same students more historical imagination they would understand that, with rare exceptions, all our rural churches came into being because a group of devoted people wanted in the most easily accessible place a church in which they could conduct worship in the manner that, because of tradition, habit or conscience, appealed to them.

But rural life was not static. In general, two main forces have been at work in rural life—changes in population and improvement in transportation facilities. It would have been unreasonable to expect that these early settlers in a pioneer country could foresee the changes that were bound to take place. Population changes were caused by deaths, births, family removals, economic pressure, natural disasters. But the most important factor was the influx of new peoples, different from the original group, often speaking a strange language and bringing with them a social heritage that prevented their rapid absorption. Of the improvement in transportation facilities, which have broken the solidarity of our rural social units, we have already spoken.

#### DENOMINATIONS

In the story of churches in rural America, there is one major factor of which we have avoided mention up to this moment, namely, our multiplied religious denominations. An impelling motive which brought certain groups to America was the desire for religious freedom. In countries where the church is controlled entirely by the state, it is possible to work out a uniformity of procedure, and a distribution of churches that photographs well on a map and that could be defended with much logic. The entire genius of American Protestant church life has led our churches in quite a different direction. We have gloried in the

fact that American citizens could worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. To most thoughtful Americans this has been one of our most precious possessions, and the fact that this privilege may have been overworked does not detract from its essential worth.

Unfortunately, even for religious freedom a price must be paid. In this instance the principle of religious freedom made it necessary, and this principle still demands that when a minority group, however small, wishes for conscientious or practical reasons to maintain a particular form of worship or type of church organization, it shall have that privilege. Neglect of this vital factor has undoubtedly led us into wholesale condemnations of groups and procedures. These condemnations have often been less than Christian, and they have likewise failed to accomplish the desired unity. To those of us who would like to see the religious people of America so much of one mind that one church could serve a given community in its totality, all of this diversity seems baffling; but it reflects a situation we have dealt with in the past and must continue to reckon with in the future.

At present, there is a pronounced tendency toward the merging of churches in local communities as well as a uniting of national church groups. There is every reason to be happy over this process. But, unless the entire character of American political life changes and we actually come under a dictatorship, there is



not the remotest possibility that either we or our children's children will live in an America that is free from religious denominational groupings. Some of the existing denominations will disappear, but others will continue to come into existence; and, whatever the cost, the American's free choice in matters of religion is too precious to be sacrificed. A Hitler might unify the church, but it is hard to believe that any real contribution to religious advancement could be made thereby. The most eager seekers after church unity would hardly, in their more thoughtful moments, wish to see unity attained by such a method and at such a price. Whatever degree of unity we are able to secure in the future, either in local communities or in national groups, must result from moral persuasion, Christian love, and growing fellowship, rather than from harshness, denunciation, hatred or intolerance, if it is to be worth while.

It is doubtless true that some of our approaches to this subject of local church and denominational mergers have been far from wise and, perhaps unintentionally, unchristian. It has been repeatedly said, for example, that the things on which Christians differ are of no importance. Such a statement would seem to be far from the truth, and to fail at the very basic point of Christian love and tolerance. Surely any belief devoutly held, or any tradition which seems precious to a group of Christians, even to an

individual Christian, is actually important, and should receive due consideration.

#### A REMADE PROGRAM

After calling attention to these limiting factors in the present situation, we say with equal emphasis that the church program for rural America insistently demands remaking. But, so far as it is possible, the remaking of rural religious life should be done cooperatively rather than denominationally.

In order to see just what our real task is in rural America, we must pause long enough to consider what contribution the rural church has made, is making, and ought to make, to rural life. The work of the rural church has fallen into several fairly simple categories. In the first place, the church provides the only opportunity for common public worship; second, its evangelistic program is designed to bring Christ to the lost and the indifferent; third, it furnishes a system of religious training for youth; fourth, through pastoral ministrations and related methods it carries a religious ministry into the home; fifth, it offers a program of social service to the needy people in the territory served, including ministry to the sick, the unfortunate, and the distressed; sixth, it furnishes leadership for enterprises that are concerned with the general welfare of the people.

As we look back over the history of the Christian religion, most of the ministry of the church can be

classified in one of these categories; and, so far as we can see, the work of the church in the future will follow the same general lines, but with continually changing emphases and methods. Our interest at the moment is to examine these six functions with a view to discovering the general nature of the adjustments which will enable the church to function with reasonable efficiency under present conditions.

Most rural church programs have been built around the worship service; of this the sermon has usually been considered absolutely essential. Other parts of the worship program have often been thrown together in a more or less haphazard fashion, but the service was considered a success if the sermon measured up to the standards demanded by the listeners. It is perhaps at this point that the church is duplicating its service needlessly and expensively. In many places, commonly described as overchurched, two or more preachers work intermittently from Monday morning to Saturday night preparing quite similar sermons to be delivered on Sunday morning to small but like-minded groups in church buildings that are in close proximity to one another. The time has come when much of that can and should be changed. Every legitimate effort of education, persuasion and love should be made toward that end. But even this worthy end is too costly if it is secured at the price of social coercion, intolerance and bitterness.

In general, plans for public worship in rural areas

should, in the future, involve larger and less numerous public congregations led by devoted, well trained and effective preachers of blameless life and character. In many cases this will demand special attention to transportation problems, so that, by bus or otherwise, persons lacking their own means of transportation may be brought to the church and taken to their homes after the service is over. Some of the advantages of this development toward larger congregations and fewer preachers will be an enriched service, an increased spiritual stimulation as a result of a larger fellowship, and a release of many men, whose time is now given to the preparation and delivery of sermons, to help in pastoral visitation, religious nurture and other neglected parts of parish work. It will remove a possible oversupply of preachers in certain places, and provide larger groups and areas with a diversified staff.

In the evangelistic program of rural churches, whether designed for a group or the individual, there is need for a unified approach to the indifferent and the unsaved. Much of this work is now done jointly by house to house visitations, community service, interdenominational preaching missions and similar methods, but strategy for the future demands a more permanent and better coordinated program of interdenominational cooperation.

As regards the religious nurture of youth, the present plan probably involves some duplication of work;

but duplication is less notable here than in some other aspects of the program, since for educational work of the best sort small groups are essential. There are, however, other adjustments which must be made in this field. We shall be treating them in greater detail later. Here it is sufficient to say that these adjustments would seem to include spreading the religious nurture program over six or seven days instead of limiting it largely to one; using in this field more full-time trained and salaried workers equipped with automobiles, so that a worker may serve more than one center; taking advantage of the opportunity afforded to approach public school groups assembled for five days of each week; and organizing the entire program of the religious nurture of youth on a larger geographical basis, sometimes including an entire county.

If, in some places, more sermons than were actually necessary have been delivered on Sunday morning, it is equally true that one of the most undermanned fields is that of a constructive religious ministry in rural homes. As churches merge, they should recognize that the purpose of their mergers is not to relieve rural people of the responsibility of church support, but to provide a better and an enriched ministry. Every preacher released from preaching should be trained to render other services, many of them in this field of home visitation.

A man who had grown up in the Middle West said

recently: "There are thousands of farm homes in this state into which no Christian minister has ever gone." Such a statement could be truthfully made of nearly every section of rural America. This neglect is appalling. Farmers need the personal approach of someone definitely interested in their spiritual welfare, farm mothers need help in the religious upbringing of their children, and the children themselves need personal acquaintance with an ambassador of Jesus Christ. Pastoral visitation in rural homes offers an alluring field of service for consecrated young women specially trained for this task, and for pastors who may be released from preaching for specialization in this important work. This is one of the adjustments which must be made as we move forward together.

Governmental and other social agencies are increasingly efficient in fields of social service and general welfare, but such programs need the spiritual touch without which community support and co-operation are likely to be half-hearted. An alert rural church leadership, built up on the basis of a specialized and diversified staff, will find full scope for all activities looking toward the establishment of Christian ideals in rural life.

#### HOW TO GET TOGETHER

Experience seems to suggest that when churches cooperate for the realization of some of the objectives already mentioned, the simplest agreements,



with a minimum of conditions and organization, are always advisable. Many union and federated churches have been wrecked on the constitution and the by-laws, over which they fought with greater tenacity after getting together, than they had over the doctrines and the creeds that had formerly separated them. There is nothing to prevent any two or three churches entering into a common-worship and a single-church program without any written agreements. In the initial stages of such union the greatest freedom should be allowed, so as to discover the best form of cooperation to be agreed upon later. It is always well to avoid property committals. Let each group continue to hold its own property during a period of experimentation, so long as that property can be used in the best interests of the combined congregations. The fact of cooperation is more important than the form. "He that will do the will, shall learn the way."

There is an abundant literature available for those who desire to make a more detailed study of methods that are being followed by local churches in their endeavors to cooperate. In a nationwide study made by the Home Missions Council of the number and kind of churches that were now united for work in one way or another, the replies brought definite information regarding about 1,296 churches.<sup>1</sup> Some of

<sup>1</sup> See *Home Missions Today and Tomorrow*, edited by Hermann N. Morse, pp. 336 ff. New York, Home Missions Council, 1934.



these were in the larger centers, but the majority were in the rural territory. All of them fall into five major groups or classifications: the denominational community church; the independent community church; the federated church; the affiliated church; the larger parish plan. Most of the five types just mentioned are self-descriptive. The denominational community church is well adapted to the needs of certain homogeneous communities, where other denominations agree to stay out of the community and the people concerned are willing to accept the leadership of the particular denomination in question. The independent community church escapes ecclesiastical pressures, but it also lacks denominational fellowships which are often so vital and stimulating. The federated church meets the needs of situations where the people desire to worship and work together, but wish to retain their denominational connections; such churches have been operating in some places for several generations. The affiliated church provides for the association of two or more churches in order to advance certain types of work, or in order that the strong may help the weak.

#### THE LARGER PARISH PLAN

To the larger parish plan we desire to give more attention at the moment, both because it offers one of the most practical plans for inducing churches of various denominations to work together, and because

it has been more successful than most other plans in actually providing the diversified staff, which is so essential if we are to meet the needs of the new day.

The larger parish plan is based upon the idea that several churches of one or more denominations in a given area shall cooperate in a unified program under a competent and cooperating leadership. Instead of two or three churches on a circuit, or within a common community struggling unrelated and alone, it seeks to group these churches under a combined ministry that will cooperate in serving the needs of the total population in a given rural area. It thus provides a type of ministry that would otherwise not be available; and makes possible the inclusion of the total needs of the area as the obligation to be met by the ministry of the church. It calls for a diversified program and leadership. A minimum staff would consist of a supervising preacher-pastor, a second pastor whose interests and responsibility would be with the boys and young men, and a third worker, who should be a woman, to have the responsibility for the work with girls and children.

As an approach to the problem of comity and co-operation, it is the opinion of those who have given time and effort to this cause that the larger parish plan offers the best solution to the problem of competition in the country church. Of the several plans that have been tried in the attempt to develop a united or cooperative church, the larger parish is

the most elastic, and it provides for the largest and best use of the existing machinery and organization of the churches. It can be put into operation with the least disruption of the present situation and, by a process of evolution, can gradually bring into being the most desirable organization and program for the religious life of the territory involved.

To secure the united effort of the churches any plan, if it is to succeed, must accept the situation as it is. That is to say, it must begin where these churches are, and, for the most part, as they are. It seeks, under these limitations, to secure the cooperation of all the churches of this larger area, or as many as are willing to come into the parish plan, to undertake certain of the religious activities as a joint co-operative interest that can be done better together than alone. It does not require that all the religious interests and activities shall of necessity be conducted as a unit by the parish. It will work toward the inclusion of as many of these interests as can be conveniently brought together, having regard to the willingness of the several churches. Many of the churches will probably continue to conduct their worship services. Time will be required to make the adjustments that are necessary for a single worship program. But many of the other activities can be carried on together. These would include such cooperative projects as evangelism, workers' conferences, leadership training, vacation church schools, weekday religious

education, social and religious work for young people, and other activities conducted in the interests of all the people.

Such a larger parish plan on interdenominational lines requires a statement of purpose, membership, organization, and program. The statement should be as simple as possible, and should avoid any agreement that would interfere with the continuing, harmonious relations of any church with its own denomination. The government of the local church, the denominational policy, and the benevolence program need not be changed by this cooperative arrangement. The churches uniting in such a parish would act through a council of representative delegates from each church, in equal number, as desired and agreed upon. Such a group working together can render a ministry to a larger number of people than can any individual church. It can provide a broader and more efficient program by eliminating duplication, and providing the vital elements of a Christian ministry which are impossible under the present system in the average rural church arrangement. The plan also makes it possible, through readjustment, to serve neglected areas of open country where the people are living in a sort of "no man's land," so far as a religious ministry is concerned.

The term "larger parish" is apt to be misleading; other designations would be more appropriate in some cases to describe the purpose of the particular

ministry, such as, for instance, a centralized ministry, a consolidated church, a cooperative parish. This plan does not necessitate an independent community church, nor does it require organic union or federation. It is rather a plan to enable the churches of one or several denominations to render a ministry with a minimum of waste and a maximum of service. It is a ministry to common areas which would otherwise remain isolated geographical units. It seeks to include the total area or geographical unit of common interest, and to bind that area into a single parish to be served with a more diversified, comprehensive and related leadership than would otherwise be possible.

The forces that have required the farmers to unite in larger units to meet the economic, social and educational needs are also demanding that similar adjustments take place in order to meet the religious needs. If the vast unchurched territory is to be reached, and if the multitudes of children and young people in rural America are to receive a religious ministry, it will require some such plan as the larger parish to make possible this important service.

Another advantage of the larger parish plan lies in the fact that through it the church can become related to the total economic and social life of the people in a way that is entirely impossible under other conditions. Of equal importance is the value of the larger parish plan in the field of the training

of youth. This aspect will be discussed in greater detail later.

Our purpose at the moment is to show that the larger parish plan offers a way by which we can begin with rural situations as they now are and, without disrupting denominational churches, proceed toward a more adequate ministry and a more complete fellowship. Some larger parishes have failed, but the causes of their failure are clear, and the pitfalls can be avoided. Many others have succeeded, and their achievements are demonstrable. One illustration from Maine may help to make the matter concrete. The Southwest Harbor-Tremont Larger Parish is located in the southwestern section of Mount Desert Island, Maine. It includes the villages of Hall Quarry, Tremont-Bernard, West Tremont, McKinley, Seal Cove, Southwest Harbor and Manset—all summer resort communities. The territory covered is about twenty miles long, and some eight miles wide. It includes a population of about two thousand people.

From 1792 until the parish was organized in 1930, the several denominations ran true to form in the planting of their churches. Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists and Episcopalians organized their units of interest and membership in various parts of these communities. The typical experiences of the religious life of New England characterized the denominational effort and experience. In the words of the Reverend Perry L. Smith, the pastor



now in charge: "Religious interest and indifference from the beginning down to the time of the larger parish were much like the tides of the ocean that surround the island—they rose and fell. There were revivals of religion and then seasons of quietude. There were seasons of friendliness between the denominations, and then seasons of misunderstanding and rivalry." In 1930 the situation came to a climax. When the denominations found themselves unable to support their individual churches with an independent ministry, they entered into a cooperative plan to serve the territory as a single parish. The achievements of the program, as it has continued to work itself out among the people, could be stated somewhat as follows:

1. A program of pastoral visitation has been worked out in which all the homes can be visited by all members of the staff, Congregational, Methodist, and Baptist. Six years of visitation on this basis has made a wonderful difference in the people.
2. A common literature giving religious inspiration and information about parish activities has been made available.
3. A division of labor and assigned responsibility for certain specific services among members of the staff according to their respective abilities has been achieved.
4. A community-wide appeal has become possible and large numbers of people have been enlisted, thus giving the zest of a more successful enterprise.
5. An extensive program has been developed that has provided opportunities for an expression of the talents



of the people. Most country people are "rusting" from disuse. They need to be used.

6. These summer resort communities have benefited especially through the appeal the new program has made to the summer constituency. These people have also found a place to express their talents and interests and, as a result, have generously and gladly taken part and also supported the budget.

7. The specific needs of particular age groups and interests have been met—children's work, young people, scouting, men's and women's interests.

8. The parish has also made its appeal to the denominational membership because it has not tried to eliminate denominational affiliations. Denominational interests are not destroyed. There is simply a larger loyalty in which this denominational loyalty has found practical expression.

And so the story could continue, with the same emphasis of a larger vision, a more Christian fellowship, a church life centered in the kingdom of God and seeking to glorify God in service.

#### ADJUSTMENTS THROUGH FEDERATION

That federation as well as the larger parish plan offers a method of adjustment to the new day is illustrated by the Federated Church of North Jackson, Ohio. Prior to 1928, there were five denominations struggling for existence in North Jackson. As a result of cooperative effort there are now but two denominations, and soon there may be only one. The advantages of the new plan are as follows:

1. There are now enough resources in people and finances to support and to challenge a full-time, well-trained leadership. In too many places there is no outlook for the rural ministry because of the lack of real opportunity and support.

2. A program such as is being sponsored makes a commanding appeal to the larger constituency of both people within the church and those who are not church members. While only a fourth of the people of the community are members of the church, it is getting a good response from twice as many people as before.

3. The quality of the program and service of the church is much higher than could possibly be the case under the old denominational divisions. Work for age groups and specialized work calling for supervision and leadership of trained teachers is now possible. Such activities as daily vacation schools, young people's organizations, a scout troop, a choir, and recreation and adult education are now going forward under competent direction.

4. A unified personnel, including farm leaders, business men, public school teachers, and workers and leaders in other community welfare work, are working through a community council to bring a spiritual interest and impact to all the work of the community. The value of such a unified leadership and approach cannot be emphasized too strongly.

5. The buildings and equipment in which the community has made investment, and which, under the old divided approach, were being used only partially, are now more widely used. One of the old buildings is a parish house where better provision is made for church, school and community organization and social activities. The public school is also used for daily vacation schools;

ten Sunday school classes are held in the building; and dramas and athletics of a community-wide character are given there. A plan is on foot to move another of the old churches alongside the present building and thus make even greater use of the property and provide better accommodations and service for the church and community life.

6. Public opinion is being created not only on matters concerning the immediate community and the local church, but embracing a wider interest as well. This leading of the people into the realm of public activities is creating a more vital interest in the life of the community, the nation, and a more worthy citizenship.

Concerning the situation the pastor makes the following interesting observations:

"The consolidated rural church has the constituency and the money to apply the most up-to-date methods to the most modern church problems. Under this advantage of experimentation I wish to consider three of our undertakings:

"First is recreation. Like most rural communities, no recreation except school athletics, and occasional stale parties, had graced the community. Older young people went to dance halls and to the dogs. Three years ago we began a church program of recreation with the following benefits: games of skill replace games of might; games of cooperation replace games of competition; games of fellowship replace games of hard feeling. Now our young people play 'Weave the Wadmal,' 'Gustaf's Toast,' and games of other

lands with the same thrill and joy with which they dance our own American quadrille. The dance hall went out of business three years ago; and the beer parlor moved out of the township last fall.

"The second experiment is a religious camp project. Our community is not wealthy; but, because we are united, we have been able to get access to a hundred acres of woodland, erect a lovely cabin with a nice fireplace, and build a large mess hall out of lumber reclaimed from what used to be an eyesore—the horsesheds of one of the old churches. We have six five-day camps each summer, for intermediate girls, Boy Scouts, two groups of seniors, older young people, and young mothers. About eighty people attended these local camps last summer. They are our most effective means of building character and creating leadership.

"The third experimental project is in the field of adult education. Last month we operated a study group upon the cooperative movement. This was a local advance into the area of community economic redemption. Fourteen young high school graduates did twenty hours of class work in addition to home study on this subject.

"During the previous winter a cooperative school for young men was held. Nine attended the full five-day session. On the first day they showed the popular attitude of hopelessness about the farm situation in

America. As soon as they heard about the peasant gospel schools in Japan and the story of Denmark, their enthusiasm was aroused. A chart of the new producer-consumer society stirred their minds with an endless list of questions. Work committees often slowed up their task because they became interested in further discussion of some factor regarding cooperation.

"The method of learning fluctuated easily between such forms as lecture, debate, panel forum, questions, craft and visual education. Songs and jokes were readily used, especially at the beginning of meals and lectures. Occasionally the atmosphere became such that prayer was a natural development in the group. The school was said to be the highest form of religious education because the group not only talked cooperation, but was, in brief, an actual cooperative community. The ministers deliberately set the stage by practising sharing and mutual aid throughout the period. Representatives from marketing cooperatives, consumers' cooperatives, credit unions, farm bureaus and county agents, as well as the county FERA rural economics and recreation instructors, gave generously of their time and equipment.

"Each person brought produce or money to the extent of \$2.25. Some of the boys brought profanity; but they did not use it. Some brought tobacco, but did not smoke. A beer parlor was at hand, but not frequented.

Is it possible that undesirable behavior can be corrected by replacing it with creative activity?" •

This story shows that a new sense of values in the church, and a new and vital program for individual and community redemption, are possible wherever churches will frankly face social adjustments. A changed and changing American countryside demands a changed rural church program.

## V: NURTURING RURAL CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

**I**N the United States there are 829 children under fifteen years of age to every 1,000 persons of from twenty to forty-four years old. In the farm population there are 1,204 children under fifteen to every 1,000 such adults over twenty, and an average of  $3\frac{3}{4}$  children to each home; whereas in the urban group there are only 645 children under fifteen to every 1,000 adults between the ages mentioned, and an average of  $1\frac{2}{3}$  children to each home. These figures have some important implications. They show that the average rural home is more than twice as important as a city home from the standpoint of America's future population. It is also evident that the relative per capita burden of providing for the nurture of the rising generation is considerably greater in the country than in the city.

Now that immigration has virtually ceased, America's population growth comes almost entirely from the rural areas, for city populations are not even reproducing themselves. At the present rate of increase, were it not for the rural birth rate, it would be only



a question of time until the *genus Americanus* would disappear from the planet. It thus becomes apparent that America's future is at present literally in the hands of her rural youth. What happens to our rural youth is, therefore, a matter of the utmost concern to the nation and to the church.

The three agencies directly concerned with the training of rural youth are the home, the school and the church.

#### NURTURE IN THE RURAL HOME

The home is the cornerstone of our Christian civilization. Unless the home can be preserved there is little hope for the things that Christianity seeks to establish. And the rural community offers greater possibilities for the continuity of the home, for the conservation of its spiritual, physical and social values, than the city. Home life is more self-sustaining in the country than in the city. Certain values, inherent in the larger family unit of the country home, have a decided spiritual importance for religious training. And the church should protect and preserve them.

The farm home and the farm work are integral parts of each other. Agriculture is interwoven with the home in such a manner as to become a vital part of its experience. The varied interests of farm life are in themselves an education into which religious experiences and spiritual growth can be centered. The farm home is, to a considerable extent, a work-

shop, playground, school and church, all in one. It is rapidly changing, but there is still enough of its primary nature and values for the church to conserve in a forward-looking program of religious nurture.

The farm home is a training ground in cooperation. Parents and children are obliged to work together. It is also a natural setting for the development of initiative and personality. All members of the family are assigned certain chores. Milking the cows, feeding the pigs, caring for the chickens, chopping the wood, and a host of similar tasks help to strengthen the mental, physical and moral stamina of the children and young people. Most business enterprises can be measured by the standards that are current on Wall Street, but that is not true of agriculture. The home and the family are so closely linked to the agricultural enterprise that it is impossible to think of them apart. In this sense, the rural home becomes an institution of fundamental service in building character, and in developing those moral and spiritual attitudes which have been reflected in the leadership contributed by the rural home to every walk of American life.

#### NURTURE IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL

According to figures compiled by the United States Bureau of Education, 53 per cent of the pupils in our public schools, and 58 per cent of the teachers, are

to be found in rural schools. One-third of the population is responsible for the education of more than one-half of the children of public school age. The average length of the school term is 156 days in the rural schools and 183 days in urban schools. The total yearly cost for each pupil is \$75.01 in rural areas, \$129.82 in the urban. For school property the investment is \$99 in rural schools, \$299 in the urban, for each pupil enrolled. The average salary for teachers, supervisors and principals is \$855 for rural communities, \$1,878 for urban. Eighty-three per cent of the state normal schools and teachers' colleges offer special courses in rural education.

This seems to suggest that there is a lack of interest on the part of rural people in their educational responsibility. The contrast, as here presented, does not reflect much credit on the rural situation. But we do not have before us all the facts. We must keep in mind a number of things if we are to evaluate correctly the educational situation in the country. First, we must remember that the family income in country districts is less than half that of the urban family. The comparison, on a basis of age distribution, shows that the farm population includes a large proportion of children of grade and high school age, also of old people no longer able to earn their livelihood, while the urban population has an excess of persons in middle life, that is, in the most productive years. Meanwhile the problem of public education for America's

boys and girls has not been solved. The following paragraph from a recent address made by the governor of one of our important states brings out the facts:

Jefferson once said that a state cannot reach maximum development if a large part of her citizens are uneducated. Let me call your attention to some inequalities that exist—some distressing facts. One hundred thousand white children of school age in the state did not enroll in any school last year. Eighty thousand enrolled children did not have access to any form of high school. Almost three thousand districts had only one-roomed schools—just a sad pretense toward education. More than sixteen hundred teachers had finished no more than the eighth grade. One thousand school districts could not raise more than \$360 a year on an eighteen mill tax. In almost every county of the state, boys and girls . . . are condemned to grow up in ignorance, without a fair chance to obtain an education. For the great mass of them the future can promise little save drudgery, poverty, and blasted hope.

The state of illiteracy in many rural areas is such that the church should raise her voice in behalf of our underprivileged rural youth. In many places, of course, the rural picture is far brighter. A new and improved rural school is evolving under a new program, in which greater emphasis is placed on rural interests and upon education for rural life, thus creating a greater opportunity for the rural church.

Only with a fresh vision of its responsibility will the rural church be able to cooperate with the new

ruralized public schools. These are rapidly increasing and are teaching boys and girls to love the farm. They will help to keep rural youth from migrating and repopulate the countryside with men and women of rural intelligence, and a new appreciation of agriculture and rural life. Also, let us remember the significant contributions of agricultural colleges. These, together with the farm high schools, represent a new day in vocational training in agriculture. They are making a splendid impact upon the mind of rural youth, and are gradually leavening the rural life of those states where they exist. But the public school curricula that are being gradually revised to meet the social and community needs of the pupils cannot afford to ignore the moral and spiritual aspects of the rural problem.

A change is also taking place in the attitude and interest of public educators toward religion and character training. This is particularly true of those who are charged with the supervision of the public school system. The tenth yearbook of the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association, published in 1932, contains the following statement in its foreword:

To many people it has seemed that the public schools could make no forthright effort at character education inasmuch as such schools were not permitted to teach religion. The teaching of religion—hence character—it was maintained, was the function of the church and private

schools. But upon more careful thought it will be observed that the teaching of religion by the public schools is limited only with reference to sectarian teaching. The great fundamental principles of religious living are the very life of our public schools. In fact it may be argued that our public schools constitute the most gigantic, organized application of those principles the world has ever known.<sup>1</sup>

Team work between church and school is now essential to both city and country. But the country community provides a more immediate opportunity to achieve such unity of action. As the church and school leaders come to see each other's contribution to the task of character building, they will also come to respect each other as allies in a common cause, and make the necessary adjustments to increase their cooperation. It should be said, however, that church and school cooperation already shows improvement. The direction of programs of religious nurture must remain in the hands of the church, but the church and school can cooperate more fully than they have done in the past. There are many things which public school teachers can do, but experience has shown that the church must employ persons thoroughly trained in the field of religious nurture to supplement the work of the school. A small but important corps of such trained workers is today reaching thousands of rural youth with religious training in those

<sup>1</sup> *Character Education*. Tenth Yearbook of the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association of the United States. Washington, The Association, 1932.



periods set aside by the state laws for religious instruction. The number of such workers should be greatly increased. In some rural public schools it may become necessary to have a religious worker on continuous duty to serve two or three consolidated schools. Thus, by dealing with many small groups she will supplement the work of the school and make that religious contact with young rural life which now, so often, lacks a direct religious influence.

#### RELIGIOUS NURTURE IN THE RURAL CHURCH

In considering the task of religious training in the rural church we should remember that the problem concerns the city, as well as the rural, church. As a result of continual migrations, such training as is given youth by rural churches finds its fruitage in city centers. Many city and suburban churches have harvested what the rural church has sown.

The idea that the cost of training youth is lower in the country than in the city is erroneous. Education costs more for each family unit in the country because there are fewer to pay the bills. There is also the extra cost of transportation. Country people are paying a larger ratio of their taxes and income for education, roads and government than are city folk. Of the net farm income, 22.5 per cent goes for taxes; of the city income, only 8.5 per cent goes for taxes. These facts should be kept in mind when the national and regional church bodies make their apportion-



ments for the various causes, but especially in making provision for religious education in the small church. Just as the small rural schools have been educating the children who have gone to the city, so have the rural church and Sunday school carried the responsibility of religious education and suffered a loss to the city and the city church after making this investment in rural youth. That the majority of these young people go to the city is inevitable, but for this very reason the responsibility of the city church to help bear the load needs consideration and emphasis.

Rural America presents an almost unlimited opportunity for Christian education. The great preponderance of children and young people still unreached by the rural ministry because they live beyond the parish limits, the poor quality of equipment and the inadequate supply of trained leaders, indicate the task in religious education now faced by the rural church. This statement in no way reflects upon the loyalty and devotion of the religious leaders now serving rural people, particularly the lay leaders in the Sunday school. All things considered, the rural church can probably count in its membership a people who, for unselfish motives and devotion, cannot be excelled. But it is time to call attention to the great opportunity that rural life offers in a constructive program for educating a Christian America.

It is estimated that there are some hundred thousand rural communities where something of a com-

munity spirit has developed. Surveys already show that in about fifty per cent of these communities a program of Christian education with leadership and equipment is going forward. But this encouraging fact is premised by a favorable economic condition. These communities usually have better economic resources, better soil and agriculture, better schools and homes. The other half represents the more backward and impoverished sections of rural America. This underprivileged portion has its schools and churches, sometimes too many churches, which frequently represent the more fanatical type of sect. Many of these sects do not believe in an educational program in religion. From these rural communities comes a large proportion of rural law-breakers. The better sections of rural America have been fairly free from crime; the crime-breeding sections are those where the economic conditions are poor, and where there is a conspicuous lack of medical care, schools and religious leadership.

But that is not the whole story. All around these hundred thousand rural communities is a vast No Man's Land for religion. This isolated and marginal people might say: "No man cares for my soul." While this population is reached by evangelistic services and Sunday schools, yet, despite the coming of good roads and the use of the automobile, it is still impossible to reach communities remote from good roads during the winter and rainy seasons.

The number of neglected children in rural America is legion—children without religious contacts of any kind, and by whom the name of Jesus is heard only in blasphemy. Recent studies of religious conditions in our rural communities reveal some alarming facts. More than ten thousand of these communities are without a Sunday school; thirty thousand rural hamlets are without spiritual guidance or teaching by persons trained to impart religious instruction. Thus about thirteen millions of children and young people of school age receive no Christian instruction. These facts should stir the church to an enlarged sense of responsibility for the spiritual care of the nation's children.

The idea is abroad in the church that such conditions as are here described obtain only in the more recently developed sections of the West. Unfortunately they are also true of the older sections of America which are in as desperate a condition. We are told by the Reverend Arthur Wentworth Hewitt, the noted rural preacher mentioned in an earlier chapter: "Some of our villages are overchurched, I do not doubt, but I am perfectly convinced that the greater part of our state is wholly unevangelized ground. The great majority of the people attend no church and are visited by no pastor." Similar conditions are reported in Maine. A study recently made reports that 100,000 of the population are without religious opportunities, 95,652 families are not identified with

any church, and 109,017 boys and girls of school age are not enrolled in any kind of church school. One community of over 2,000 people had only 24 church members.

In neglected fields like these, the missionary must not only organize Sunday schools and train teachers but visit the homes and get to know the mothers and the children. The Presbyterian Board of National Missions conducts an outstanding enterprise aimed to meet just this need. It has a staff of workers known as Sunday school missionaries who are to be found in almost every state of the Union. They report the maintenance of some 3,500 mission Sunday schools where there is no church or other Christian organization. Moreover, they report that some 2,500 Presbyterian churches can trace their beginnings to a little Sunday school organized by a missionary. In reaching these neglected children of rural America this strategy is one that should commend itself to all the mission boards.

#### THE RURAL SUNDAY SCHOOL

The Sunday school has always been the principal institution for the propagation of religion in rural America. To it, more than to any other institution or form of religious ministry, must be credited the measure of religious life that has obtained. With all its faults and limitations it has done a great work. To the Sunday school rather than the revival meeting is

due the credit for the religious life of country people. But something has happened to rural life and rural institutions; whole sections of our country are without the stimulating force of a Sunday school, and, as a result, organized religion has degenerated.

We have assumed throughout this discussion that the Sunday school is still an important institution for religious nurture and character building in rural life. Call it the church school, or whatever name you please, to the average rural church member and the rural community in general the Sunday school still stands as the institution that unfailingly gives religious instruction. This fact need in no way detract from the value of the other agencies for religious education. The daily vacation school and weekday religious instruction are all important, and every rural church should engage in some form or other of these special activities. But it is to the Sunday school that rural people will look for their religious education for some time to come.

The Sunday school has been one of the most effective agencies in developing religious federation and cooperation. There is no other interdenominational agency in which the people of the various churches have so freely mingled as in the interdenominational Sunday school conventions and associations. As a result, bigotry and a narrow sectarianism have vanished in organized Sunday school work. Through the

World's Sunday School Association this spirit of cooperation in Christian work has spread to all lands.

The Sunday school has been a powerful democratic and social factor in the religious life of rural areas. The Sunday school can once more become in rural communities a common ground for cooperative endeavor. It has been neglected through recent years. For these and other reasons, obvious to all who have had experience in the rural church, we must keep the Sunday school as the primary institution for religious education in rural life. If, however, rural Sunday schools are to function effectively, and their influence is to be extended, a system of religious training must keep in mind the agricultural background of life. Much of the material prepared for city church schools can be used in the country, but there must also be an educational program that springs from the rural situation itself. Religious education for the rural church must be somewhat indigenous to the soil, and must be the outgrowth of the struggle to find God in the joys and the sorrows of rural experience. Trees, grass, flowers, bees and birds, the animals on the farm, the hills, the brooks—these are resources for the purpose of a religious ministry to all children.

These lessons of nature are particularly valuable in developing the worship attitude and in teaching reverence. Children may learn to reverence God as they are made aware of his presence in the world of nature



about them. They will come to know God as they learn to reverence the beauty he created around them. Teachers report very practical results wherever they use these natural methods of worship and teaching. Children who were ready to destroy the flowers and shrubbery in gardens and woods, came to respect these things as living symbols of God's love, and to protect them. One small child's prayer included this: "God, we thank thee for the flowers and trees that grow, and for the caterpillars and the butterflies." Another child prayed, "Thank you, God, for the seeds that grow." The habit of prayer under these conditions acquires reality and purpose; it helps to form a worship attitude that is more likely to last because it is related to living things and daily life. Worship on this plane with little children will be achieved, not by telling them what God is like, but by interpreting experiences in their familiar daily life.

#### NURTURE IN WEEKDAY RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

It is very clear, however, that we cannot rest the case for Christian nurture on a Sunday observance. All of life must become the objective of religion. All life is sacred, and we should embrace every opportunity to integrate religion with the daily process of living. This is especially important in the formative periods of childhood and youth, and the significance and opportunity of a weekday program of religious education is now generally recognized.



Religion must be interwoven with education. Education in the public schools and religion cannot, be kept in separate compartments. Education and religion are both concerned with life interests and the crises confronting the nation. Unless they implement each other, thousands of children and young people will grow up without an abiding conception of religion or God. The facts already presented are sufficient to drive home the need of rural America. Only one child in three of public school age is enrolled in a Sunday school of any faith. Of those enrolled, only fifty per cent are in average attendance, and only one in four will unite with the church.

The situation within the Protestant denominations is even more serious than among other faiths. For the fifteen million pupils in Protestant Sunday schools, only twenty-four hours of study are provided each year. The Catholic church provides two hundred hours for its eight and one-half million children, and the Jews provide three hundred and thirty-five hours of religious training for their one and one-half million pupils. Meanwhile, the Protestant church has relied too much upon its preaching program and revivalism, and has neglected the more normal avenues to conversion and religious nurture provided by education. However, the last ten years have seen a quickening of conscience in this matter of weekday religious instruction.

The weekday church school has already made con-

siderable progress in many rural communities. Various types of organizations and programs abound with greater or less success. Some are strictly denominational, promoted by the individual church, and conducted out of school hours in the church building. Another is the interdenominational type, also conducted out of school hours and in one of the churches of the community. Another type, found by experience to be the most successful, is that in which one or more denominations provide a fully trained and qualified teacher to give all her time to this work. The program is conducted in the public school building during school hours.

A very good illustration from an open country region is that of the B. F. Tobey Parish in Tompkins County, New York. For several years now a thorough program, covering the several schools in the parish, has been successfully conducted. Miss Christine Burdick, until recently in charge of this project, gives a most encouraging report of progress and achievement. Her public school schedule called for three whole days each week, and included ten schools and twenty-two classes. All the children in the several townships were given this instruction. Textbooks were used in the younger groups; the older pupils were led in discussions of the problem of war and of social issues. Miss Burdick says:

The children worked out special worship services to be used in family worship, made notebooks, studied pic-

tures and their meaning, used special music, and also dramatized some of the stories they had written, in addition to the usual class discussion. Whenever possible, we try to correlate the work to that of the public school. There has been fine cooperation on the part of the teachers. They bring to me the problems of the children which they observe during the week; remind the children to put into practice the principles discussed in the class in religion; ask for books to use in helping the children, and, in some cases, use Bible materials and worship helps in the opening sessions of the school.

It has been found that an experienced religious education worker accomplishes more than a volunteer personnel. So successful has the work been under the leadership of a competent director that there seems to be no reason why it should not be extended to hosts of rural communities where the church school reaches only a percentage of the children of the rural section.

#### COOPERATING WITH OTHER AGENCIES

But no rural church that is wise will expect to use only its own special agencies. There are many other agencies which lend themselves to the achievement of moral and spiritual ends. We cite only one, the 4-H Club, and that because it is so particularly adapted to rural life. Concerning this matter one worker reports:

There is one avenue of help for both teachers of older children and young people which I do not think is fully

appreciated, and that is the program and training available for and through 4-H Clubs. For both boys and girls, the program as worked out in Iowa and Illinois (the only two states with which I am familiar) furnishes a well rounded program of activities and information that is unequalled elsewhere. And the best part of it is that leaders are first taught themselves, so that any willing, though untrained, teacher can function as leader.

When I was working in the Cedar Church I had two groups, grade school girls and high school girls, in club work. All but one of my Sunday school girls were in the high school club, and the work of the club and class was integrated to a considerable extent. Of all the club work I have ever done, this is the most worth while for rural boys and girls. I think that the teachers of those in the 4-H age groups could well look into the matter of correlating the activities of their Sunday school classes with 4-H clubs, of which they might be members, or of organizing such clubs for their groups if none is in existence.

#### VACATION BIBLE SCHOOLS FOR RURAL CHILDREN

The vacation Bible schools have been the most popular and successful means used by rural churches and missionary agencies to reach the isolated children of rural areas. These schools have also proved to be excellent examples of interdenominational cooperation. Many rural churches report that their vacation Bible schools are conducted on a community-wide basis, with all the churches joining in the enterprise. In some sections of the country, county and state organizations and programs have been set up. Notable

among these endeavors is the work of the Department of Vacation and Weekday Church Schools of the International Council of Religious Education. Under the direction of this organization whole sections of neglected rural territory have been covered by a systematic program of vacation schools. The several denominations have pooled their resources, thus making available a veritable army of workers that has entered neglected communities after careful planning, consultation and cooperation with the local churches and their ministers. It was thus possible for all the children of these needy places to attend a two or three weeks' vacation school.

The Hocking Valley project offers a typical program. For several years daily vacation schools were conducted on a somewhat extensive basis in Hocking Valley, Ohio, and the surrounding territory. Several denominational boards each conducted their own schools which, as a consequence, varied in type and quality. It was in 1935 that the State National Commission was organized and, in cooperation with the Ohio Council of Churches and the International Council of Religious Education, a number of projects in character building for children and young people were carried out in certain sections of the state.

One of these experiments concerned the daily vacation schools in the Hocking Valley. This was an attempt to unite the several major denominations in one cooperative committee for the purpose of ex-

perimenting in a program of daily vacation schools in the chosen territory. The plan calls for approximately two hundred schools, a laboratory training school for the workers, and the working out of a common curriculum and program. A splendid start has been made, and the results to date have fully justified the experiment. This field combines interdenominational service with other social service and character building agencies. Its cooperative goal is to reach the masses of children and young people who are without the ministries of religion.

In one county of the state only 735 young people, out of some 5,000, have any connection with the church or the church school. Only 5,000 people, out of a total population of some 20,000, have any connection with the church. The high school principal of a small town in this territory said that the relationships of boys and girls between the ages of twelve and fourteen were on a very low moral plane. This lack of wholesome home life, recreational activities, or moral and religious training, is being met in some of these more remote sections by a combined ministry of the churches and other social and welfare agencies. The program in Hocking Valley is a splendid demonstration of what can be done if we face the task together.

#### THE LARGER PARISH AND RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

In many cases the larger parish plan offers the best solution to the religious education problem in rural



areas. A special study of the larger parish made for the Institute of Social and Religious Research by Dr. Edmund de S. Brunner<sup>1</sup> notes that "the larger parishes have made a determined and somewhat successful attack upon this problem. Indeed, some of the loosely integrated types of larger parishes were organized and exist chiefly for religious educational work." The gains in religious education reported in these larger parish endeavors were in enrollment in church schools, attendance, teacher training, daily vacation schools, and weekday religious instruction. Along all these lines larger parishes show great improvement over the independent rural church school. Other progress was also evidenced in the use of lesson materials, in the grading of the school, and in the more diversified programs of camps, conferences and various young people's activities.

#### YOUTH PROBLEMS IN THE COUNTRY

The problems facing rural youth are not markedly different from those confronting city youth; they differ only in kind and degree. Both rural and urban youth are afflicted with the same unrest and disillusionment. The major difficulties can be briefly stated as follows: bewilderment, postponed marriage, economic uncertainty, a barren social life, and lost opportunity for education. These maladjustments foster a general suspicion of the adult generation, its ability

<sup>1</sup> *The Larger Parish*. New York, Harper and Brothers, 1934.



or desire to do anything intelligent or constructive about the situation. As a result there is a growing consciousness on the part of youth that there is something wrong, that they must do something about it. They may not fully understand all that is involved. They may not be hopeful of results, but there is a general and spontaneous desire to change conditions and to "get a break." And while I am fully convinced that youth is not going to "build the new world alone," I do not blame them for believing that they will, and starting out to do so.

Our young people see millions of their age group wandering about the country with little hope for a job; they know that it is wrong, and are rebelling against it. They see the results of a false accumulation of wealth and the wrong use of it, and many of them desire to change the system that makes it possible. Youth sees the hatred of race and class that exists as part of our selfish world. They also see the church, which prays that all may be one, subscribing to these forces of hatred and war. They often see the clergy silent in the presence of these evils, and they are incensed and are themselves becoming vocal about these things. They do not desire to destroy, but to fulfill. They may be wrong, but the chances are they are right.

This, in general, is the situation that confronts youth and that explains the youth movement. To this extent it is a problem and a movement of city as well

as of rural youth. But there are some aspects of the movement that, in a peculiar way, affect rural young people. The problems of farm people are seriously involved with the whole situation. Youth sees the tragic failures of our agricultural economy. It sees the sharecropper and his family reduced to slavery and misery. It sees people spending their entire time in planting, chopping and picking cotton, when they cannot get clothes to wear: people who produce cotton are wearing burlap. Youth knows that this is wrong, and is not content merely to talk about it. The young people of the future will not sit idly in our churches and allow these things to continue without making some attempt to change them. We should rejoice that there is a section of youth that is taking up this challenge.

Is the church ready to share the quickening conscience of youth and cooperate in a realistic way? These are the parishioners of tomorrow. The church that is wise will identify itself with agencies that are now leading rural youth, think of youth as part of its program, place youth's problems and interests in the front, and invite youth's cooperation. These rural organizations in agriculture offer a program which the church can profitably study. They have succeeded in interesting and enlisting a larger proportion of the youth in the work they are doing than has the church. They are giving to youth a sense of the value of the community and their responsible place in it. They

are teaching young people the principles of cooperation and providing an outlet for their energies and idealism. They are creating in youth a more wholesome attitude toward the farm and developing a new type of rural culture. All these aims are in harmony with the work of the church, and for this reason rural churches should keep closely in touch with and, wherever possible, furnish the initiative for these movements.

The success of many rural churches with young people is due to leaders who use sympathetic guidance, and do not try to control. We must not think that because only a few young people can be gathered together, nothing worth while can be done. Some churches and individual leaders do not see the value of working with small groups of four or five young people, and particularly with individuals. Some of the most effective young people's work I know is being done in very small groups. Indeed, the danger is to magnify numbers and lose sight of the qualitative opportunity that the small group and individuals present. These young people will be the adult leaders tomorrow. The training and inspiring of these small groups of young people is an investment in the future, not only of youth and agriculture and rural life, but of the whole church. The ideals and interests that enlist the loyalties of young people help them to understand and appreciate the experiences that are native to rural life, and enable them

to look forward to a useful future on the farm and in rural vocations. When dignity and self-respect are restored to rural life, youth will become aware of the presence of God, and develop those spiritual experiences that are rooted in the soil and in the things that belong to the countryside.

## VI: RURAL LEADERSHIP

THE moment is certainly opportune to consider quite definitely what can be done to provide a more adequate and a more specialized leadership for rural areas. For the first time in American history we seem to be faced with a permanent oversupply of workers engaged in the production of material things. Social and economic writers are pointing out that, while there is a definite limit to the amount of raw materials available, and to the ability of people to utilize and consume material things, there is apparently no limit to the introduction of automatic machine processes. Nor is there any hope that an increasingly mechanized industry will absorb the great army of oncoming youth.

If our young people or even adults are to find places of usefulness in our national life, then the so-called "service" fields must be very greatly enlarged. These are occupations which do not have to do with the manufacture or production of food, clothing, buildings, machinery, furniture, and other utilities of life. They are primarily concerned with personal health and comfort, with religious and cultural val-

ues. This release of human energy for dealing with the spiritual and the cultural, as contrasted with the material, is not a calamity. It will be so only if we fail to sense the fact that this released energy can and should be used in socially creative ways.

All this is but an introduction to the statement that throughout rural America there is an enormous religious and social need. From our high schools, colleges and professional schools, and from the great ranks of those who have graduated, comes a vast army of young people who could find happiness, self-expression and useful service in the promotion of religious, recreational and social welfare in our rural areas. It is our purpose in this chapter to give consideration to some of the problems connected with the training and placing of such leadership. This will include pastors of churches, home visitors, specialists in weekday religious instruction, leaders in vacation schools and in boys' and girls' clubs, and in general recreation. In some of our neediest sections it will call for nurses, dentists and doctors.

Following the report of the Country Life Commission, appointed by Theodore Roosevelt in 1908, a great interest was shown in the possibilities of rural leadership. The demand for those who had received some training for rural life—county agents, rural school teachers, home bureau workers and others—increased tremendously. Naturally this movement reached the church and called for a better trained



rural ministry. Some very notable developments in the administration of the country church in the various denominations can be traced to this demand for an improved rural leadership. But with all that has been accomplished in the last quarter-century, only a small fraction of the need has been met. Now that a drastic change has taken place in the trend of population, there is a still more urgent reason why we should give attention to the training of rural leaders. To a large extent the program of elementary education in our public schools and in our colleges is still built around the interests and activities of city life. It is highly important at this juncture in our national development to stress rural interests, and to present to students in high school and college an adequate view of rural life. Youth likes to be challenged, and the challenge that rural America now offers to young people, disillusioned and thwarted by the depression, should be irresistible. This must not be thought of in terms of large financial compensation, but should be measured in the values of supreme human service and creative work. The place of rural life in our developing civilization must be given more attention in the educational program.

Our colleges have drawn their students in large numbers from rural and village areas. They have not assumed any responsibility for returning a proportionate number of those young people to rural life, trained and inspired to carry on the specific tasks



that rural life demands. On the contrary, those who return have been trained for city professions and activities, and go back to the country with an urban mind which makes it exceedingly difficult for them to settle down and work out their life purposes. This has been particularly true, until recently, of rural school teachers. They have returned to teach in our rural schools, but their ideals, objectives, and methods have been in keeping with the urban type of life.

The obligation still rests upon our colleges to train a larger number of youth for life in the country. Of course, the agricultural colleges have made a real contribution to rural leadership. They have pioneered in training for specific rural tasks, and they are trying to keep pace with rural technical, economic and social needs. In extending the benefits of education to the people, the agricultural colleges have again set the pace. They have developed this service until now millions of dollars are annually spent in a program of extension education, which includes many subjects of interest to rural people—instruction to farmers in better methods of agriculture and of livestock production, organization, markets and farm demonstration, and for women home economics, the health of adults and children, useful arts and cultural subjects. The extension program in club work has been an outstanding contribution to the life of rural youth.

## SUMMER SCHOOLS FOR RURAL PASTORS

To these same agricultural colleges belongs much of the credit for another very significant contribution to rural leadership. The summer schools for town and country pastors, held usually at the colleges of agriculture of the state universities, have been most effective agencies of training. These schools, of two to three weeks' duration, follow a carefully prepared schedule of courses and laboratory work for three successive years. The Home Missions Council has given publicity to them and, through its Committee on Town and Country Work, has secured the cooperation of the denominations and their financial aid for scholarships. For ten years about twenty-eight schools have been held annually, some for Negro pastors, with an average attendance of about twelve hundred students. To state colleges of agriculture, for their annual investment of about thirty thousand dollars in this enterprise, the denominations owe a debt of gratitude. The least the church can do is to cooperate by providing scholarships to enable town and country pastors to attend, and to make a careful selection of those men who would profit by a three years' course. Those selected should be young men whose natural aptitudes and inclinations are for rural work. Only those who have found their destinies in the rural church can benefit themselves and their parishes by this equipment. The obligation and opportunity to expand this program of education and

to train the leadership for the new and altered rural situation rest also upon our denominational colleges and seminaries.

While some things have already been accomplished, when we consider the total task we realize that we have hardly touched the fringe of providing adequate rural religious leadership. The demand now is for a greatly enlarged religious extension service that will touch all phases of rural life and will be comparable to the superb service offered by the agricultural colleges. But at the moment we are concerned primarily with the rural ministry.

#### A SEMINARY TASK

Rural people are aware of their religious needs; they are asking for a type of leadership adapted to the country. They no longer want pastors who look upon the rural charge merely as a stepping-stone to something better. Men who feel that an injury has been done them when appointed to a rural church will soon find themselves unwanted by these churches. The administrators in the different denominations who make appointments should take to heart this changing attitude of rural people. They demand ministers who believe in rural life, and who desire to satisfy its manifold needs. Rural service calls for a wholehearted devotion and understanding. Only the pastor who can say "Mine own people" will fulfill his mission in life.

According to the evidence furnished by rural ministers, most of the theological seminary graduates are prepared for an urban rather than a rural ministry. Those who are succeeding are doing so in spite of their seminary training rather than because of it. Some have frankly faced the facts, and have, with courage and initiative, started over again to train themselves in the philosophy, psychology, sociology, education and technique of rural work.

There are some outstanding exceptions to what has been said in regard to the seminaries. A few of them, during the past fifteen years, have established chairs of rural leadership, and are giving, in part, the kind of training designed to meet the needs of a rural ministry. The men who have been touched by this influence constitute the most hopeful leadership in the rural church. Many of these seminary courses were made possible for a period of years by the rural departments of home mission boards and by philanthropic foundations. In some cases this assistance is still being provided. But, in spite of financial aid the work has been difficult, and its results achieved under serious disadvantages. It has had, in certain instances, to make good over the prejudice, apathy, indifference, and sometimes deliberate opposition of members of seminary faculties.

One might infer from this attitude that the unpopularity of rural parishes with promising seminary graduates is due to their being trained as if inevitably

they will occupy metropolitan pulpits. As a matter of fact, many seminary men are first appointed to rural churches, and continue to serve them for a considerable period after graduation. It would, therefore, seem wise to prepare men to succeed in these first years of their ministry. It might be well for seminaries to require that certain members of their faculty spend one year in seven serving a rural church. This might be hard upon the church, but it would work wonders for the professor, and, in turn, for his students. A sign of the times is the declared policy of certain theological seminaries under which a period of field work, actually serving a parish, will hereafter be required of their students. The analogy for this method was found in the custom of requiring medical graduates to serve for a year as hospital internes.

Registrars and professors in different seminaries have provided the following information on this problem: At Bangor Theological Seminary, Maine, all student pastors are serving rural churches in communities of under twenty-five hundred (100 per cent); at Iliff Theological School, Colorado, all but three are serving in rural or small town charges (94 per cent); at Garrett Biblical Institute, Illinois, and at Drew Theological Seminary, New Jersey, 82 per cent are serving the rural field.

That this question of a specialized training for rural pastors is a real problem is illustrated by the

following remarks of a graduate, which could be repeated from the experiences of many seminary men:

Recalling my experiences as pastor of the village church in Illinois, of the church located in the open country in northern Ohio, and as pastor of three churches in southern Ohio, I am amazed when I think of the little help that my training in the seminary was to me in meeting the real problems with which I was confronted in these churches. My teachers helped me in my study of the Bible, church history, and in the preparation of sermons, and made a few suggestions concerning pastoral work. But I must say, in the light of these years spent in grappling with real problems in small towns and open country, that the training I received in the seminary was very limited. It was the kind of training that helped me to talk about religion, but it certainly wasn't the kind of training that helped me to deal with economic, social, recreational, educational, and other real problems with which the folks who live in small towns or in the open country are confronted.

In my judgment the seminaries of my day woefully failed in giving to the young men preparing for the ministry the training that would help them become adequate kingdom builders through the church. I suppose one reason why I feel this way about it is because I tackled the job of rebuilding a community in the light of the gospel of Christ without ever feeling that I could write to any of my teachers for suggestions or advice. I had the feeling that their experience and point of view was such that they could be of little real assistance to me as a pioneer making an honest attempt to apply the gospel to every phase of life in the community.

AWING CHRISTIANITY  
ALLAHABAD



Another seminary graduate evidently was more fortunate. It is significant to find him using outside agencies, like the Farm Bureau, to supplement his work:

A good rural minister should understand the various great forces at work in the country, urban as well as rural. I appreciate very much the work in college and seminary that gave me at least some background of the various rural movements, and the forces which have helped to mold rural life. I have been a member of the Farm Bureau since leaving seminary, and feel that it has added materially to my ministry. But I am afraid that there are many ministers who take no interest in such organization.

There are certain techniques that I believe essential, such as utilizing simple buildings and meager equipment. I am sorry that I missed a Farm Bureau course on building repairs and construction, which stressed simplicity, usefulness and economy. We should know more about making good use of simple little rooms for Sunday school, dramatics, socials, dinners, weddings, funerals, and other purposes. All of our religious education work assumed an ideal plant with a fine staff of teachers. Why shouldn't most of our seminary courses at least begin with the realistic picture of a small church? Certainly an interesting course could center around the rural economy and life of the Bible, with rural stories, rural texts, and Sunday school lessons. . . . I would suggest some work on the movements for church federation and unity; also studies of such interdenominational organizations as the Federal Council of Churches and the Home Missions Councils.



## PREACHING

Preaching in the rural church is important, but relatively less important than in the city. Preaching to a town and country congregation must be simple and direct. The so-called scholarly sermon has little place in the rural pulpit. The sermon must be understood in terms of their own experience; it must satisfy the questions uppermost in rural minds, especially those new problems that are invading rural life and are alien to rural experience. The radio has had a marked influence upon the preaching program. It has stimulated rural interest in national and international questions. But topical sermons, doctrine, church history, and even theology have little place in rural preaching.

Rural people want what they call "Bible sermons." By instinct they identify their life in the country with the pastoral setting of the Bible. When the preacher takes some biblical character or biblical truth, and interprets it in the terms of their daily experience, they are pleased. We need more preaching on life situations. More preachers should be trained in the pulpit instead of the classroom. This calls for greater provision for field supervision. What is needed in the preaching program is not more of it, but more in it. At a recent larger parish conference in Maine and New York, preaching was voted a second place.

## WORSHIP

Worship is beginning to occupy a more important place in the rural church. Equipment for a worship program is much more difficult to obtain in the rural than in the city church. The seminary should enable men to conduct a dignified and inspiring worship service without expensive equipment and an elaborate ritual. Good music and a trained choir are as much desired and appreciated in the country as in the city. More of the laymen must be brought to participate in the service, and the ministry must be helped, not only in the appreciation of these things, but also in the practical methods whereby they can be achieved. Not enough attention has been paid to this situation by the seminaries. The worship program in the rural church must be conceived of in terms of the things that are most natural to the rural community. It must help to create reverence for, and appreciation of, the everyday beauties of country life. Nature, the soil, the birds, trees, animal life, the stars, all must occupy a central place in the worship program, and not only at a Harvest Festival. In this way there will be developed a new sense of the dignity and worthiness of the rural life and its church.

## PASTORAL WORK

In the field of pastoral service the rural church presents certain clear tasks. In these days of changing conditions, country people are no longer as isolated

as they once were. They are in touch with other people by telephone and the radio; they can call their pastor at any moment. Thus the older type of pastoral visitation is scarcely necessary. There is, however, an increasing opportunity for a type of pastoral work that is possible only in the village and rural community. The country minister can get to know his people more intimately than the city minister. He can become a confidant, a personal friend, a counselor-at-large. This is a tremendous advantage, but to make the most of it a minister must be versed in the ways of his people. The psychology of rural life and rural people is a study in itself. While much can be scientifically studied in the seminary, it is obvious that more is acquired in the field by residence and daily intercourse. The case method of pastoral work is also becoming an important consideration in the rural community, and it should be included in the course on pastoral work.

#### THE COMMUNITY

The city church can often excuse itself from the responsibility of community service. It is well-nigh impossible to define the community in the city. There are, to be sure, certain obligations of citizenship and social service of a general character, but they lack the homogeneity of the more compact community life of rural areas. The organizations of rural life are community-wide and have a community

character. It is necessary for the successful minister to become an integral part of the life of the community, and his church must also relate itself to the organizations and objectives of the community life, so that some training in the particular experiences of community building becomes imperative for the rural minister. Too often ministerial students are left to guess and grope for those things that are necessary for this service. To allow the rural minister to jump into community work without some scientific knowledge and guidance in this field is to do him a great injustice.

There is now emerging a new community in rural society. It is the result of the new relationships that have developed between town, village and open country groups. The depression, with its interchange of families, and individuals of all age groups, has linked them together. This community is destined to play one of the most important rôles in the coming social order. Leadership for this movement must be found in the church if it is to be socially valid and spiritually satisfying. The seminaries must give more attention to the needs of this community challenge in their training of the rural ministry.

#### TRAINING FOR PASTORS IN RELIGIOUS NURTURE

From what we have said it will be seen that the rural ministry should be better trained for the work of religious nurture. Success in Christian life depends

on one's relationships to God and to one's fellow-men. This involves an appreciation of life as a matter of growth; the major work of the minister is that of tending individual lives in much the same way as growing plants are tended. This is particularly true in the case of children and young people. Pastors must think of the spiritual growth of these children and youth in terms of their physical and mental growth.

Such a ministry calls for technique in religious nurture. Theological education is deficient in this nurture interest and training. It is true that in large city churches provision is usually made for this type of ministry, often rendered by a young woman who has received some training in this field of service. But in the rural church the pastor must often be responsible for the whole program. In this we are making a plea for something more than the formal religious education courses which, in too many instances, consist of academic generalities and educational techniques that do not reach down to the growing experiences of boys and girls in rural life. Training in religion must become an integral part of the growing process in rural experience. It must consider the several limitations of rural life as contrasted with the advantages and resources of the city. It should identify itself with the simpler social experiences of the average rural situation.

Attention has been called to the unique home and

family life of rural communities, and to the fact that the rural home is the most natural school for religious nurture. The lives of people are influenced by the ways in which they must earn their livelihood. This helps to determine contacts, establish interests and mold their thought. The farmer and his family are confronted with life at every turn. They are dealing with living things. During recent years the growth of biological sciences has deepened this interest and consciousness.

It is therefore natural and logical to ask for an enlarged interest in and emphasis upon the training of the pastor in those religious ideals and techniques that are involved in a nurturing ministry, particularly as it applies to rural children and youth. Religion must become a more natural thing. It should grow out of the roots of life itself. Too much of present-day religion, as set forth and developed by the traditional church program, is an engrafted process. If education determines conduct, it must of necessity revolve around the growing process. If rural religion is to tell us what we must do with our lives, it must itself be centered in rural life.

Whatever may be the case in the city, rural life, by its very nature, cries out for a ministry of religious nurture. If we are to live creatively, then the religious process must be creative. The rural church is waiting for such a ministry. The ministry of tomorrow in the rural church will be less of a revolutionary proc-



ess and more of an evolutionary growth of the inner spirit. There will be less of the idea of religion as an escape from life and more and more the consciousness of religion as a way of life. "I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have it more abundantly." Thus spake the Master as he announced his glorious mission to men. "And Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and man." It is for the training of a ministry for rural life with this as the central emphasis that we make this appeal.

#### THE TRAINING OF SPECIAL WORKERS

But this ministry cannot be left alone to the pastor of the rural church. While financial limitations compel the rural pastor to carry forward a nurturing ministry single-handed, there is also a great need of an army of trained young women to render this special service. Sometimes such a worker could serve several adjoining parishes. During recent years wherever this leadership has been established, it promises to revolutionize the religious work in those sections of rural life. It opens new and greater opportunities in religious nurture for millions of rural children and young people who have had only the limited leadership of an untrained volunteer teacher. The Reverend Jay S. Stowell gives the following impressions of a visit to the field of such a worker:



One morning I was met at Ithaca by Miss Viola Schuldt, a college-trained young woman with postgraduate work in religious education. After an early breakfast we hustled for some miles over hard roads, swung onto a narrow, winding, dirt road, and finally reached the top of a hill, where we found an ancient one-room school. A group of children were awaiting the opening of school, and a teacher was approaching from a distance.

The bell rang, and for sixty minutes I listened to Miss Schuldt, a thoroughly prepared teacher, presenting, according to approved pedagogical methods, a very effective lesson on God as the heavenly Father. The pupils belonged to no church and attended no Sunday school; some of them were from homes of poverty. During that hour they received an impression which will stay with them through life. They were so intent upon the lesson that, when a huge threshing machine lumbered past over the country road in full view of the window, scarcely an eye was turned. These farm youth learned something that will make them better citizens and will permanently enrich their lives. At ten o'clock we sped on to another school, where a still larger group of pupils awaited a lesson on Thanksgiving, of equally high merit; four o'clock found us on another hilltop, completing the sixth lesson for the day, this time upon the meaning of the kingdom of heaven. It was one of the most interesting days I have ever spent, for I had been watching an outstanding representative of a new profession putting into practical operation a program of amazing promise to rural religion.

This type of leadership is so full of promise, and the practical results are so encouraging, that it should now become one of the main objectives in the training program and the ministry to rural areas. It

should appeal to people of means who could give of their wealth and who desire to see something done in the field of religious nurture for rural life. It should also appeal to the great foundations that have been established for educational and social progress. It has become increasingly clear that the so-called regular ministry in the rural church must be supplemented by an army of well trained and qualified teachers of religion and home visitors. This is especially needed in the case of mothers and young girls. Such a ministry would transform the present situation in underprivileged communities. Women and girls are a neglected group, so far as a trained leadership is concerned. Their problems need the help of the trained woman visitor.

Women have been the backbone of the rural church. The future of rural religion is largely in their hands. New forces of evil are now abroad in the land and they are finding their way into the life of rural womanhood. If we are to deal realistically with these evils there must be raised up a leadership of womanhood to meet them. Here, again, the agricultural colleges have set the pace, and through their extension courses in home-making, and their work among rural women, they have sent forth well trained women to educate and inspire rural women to meet new problems and greater tasks. The church should parallel this program of agricultural extension service

with a trained leadership for rural religious service by women.

Attention should also be paid to the recreational needs of rural people. Labor-saving devices and improved methods in agriculture have somewhat reduced the hours of labor in agricultural production. The use of leisure time is a growing problem among rural people. It is a peril, but it also presents new opportunities for Christian service and leadership. The institutions and agencies that can capture this leisure time of rural people will gain a strategic position from which to assess and direct the social and moral ideals of rural people. The church cannot expect to monopolize all the leisure time, but it must secure a share of this time and fill it with healthy and socializing activities, while cooperating with other agencies in keeping clean and wholesome the social and recreational life of rural people.

We have referred to social case work, with a religious emphasis and Christian objectives. City parishes have their deaconesses and trained workers in religious social service. The door is wide open for such workers in the rural field. While few rural parishes could finance such a worker, a number of them, or perhaps the rural churches of a county, could cooperate in such a program. A cooperative plan could also be worked out whereby such leadership could be secured by the joint support of the churches and the extension division of the agricul-

tural college. Such an arrangement has already proved its value in several states and demonstrated the success of the cooperative plan in the social welfare of rural people.

#### VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP

The training of professional leaders naturally suggests a greater use of trained volunteer leadership. The country community is not going to be Christianized by the ordained ministry and the professional evangelist alone. The facts presented regarding the effects of social change have shown that the constant trend has been in the direction of an ever enlarging territory and the elimination of ministers. The rural parish has lost its traditional sense of security, self-sufficiency, even its physical boundary. Economic necessity has determined this condition. Every country minister complains of the size of the field he must cover and the multiplicity of tasks he is called upon to perform.

But the fact remains that in recent years we have not used the laymen of the church as we did in earlier times. If the rural field is ever to be served adequately it will require the enlistment and training of an army of lay workers. I am thinking here especially of those who will be willing to do the specific types of lay evangelism involved in the conduct of meetings, in personal work and evangelism, as well as in religious training and social service. There are a

number of lay people in every parish who could be inspired to undertake this work, if the right approach were made, and a training program instituted to encourage them.

There are multitudes of people in rural fields who will never be reached by the professional ministry, and who, if they are to be won to Christ, must be reached by some understanding, sympathetic volunteer leader. To this end the program of the church should involve its laymen. It is said that the more alert and intelligent farmers look upon the rural church as physically and socially defective. Dr. C. J. Galpin, at the National Conference on the Rural Church, held in Washington, D. C., January 13, 1936, had the following to say on this important subject of the laymen and the rural church:

Is the possible layman of tomorrow waiting for the possible church of tomorrow, which, in its physical and social characteristics, shall appeal to his sense of reality? He must be waiting for something; for, of a truth, the American farmer and his family are as susceptible to the socialized idealism of organized Christianity as any family in the palmiest days of the Christian church in any nation. Only a downright misanthrope can doubt the applicability of the gospel to the ruralite; for either he must be doubting God or doubting this generic type of man.

Have I not many a time seen the staid American farmer aglow with high Christian feeling and comprehension under the spiritual charm of a great religious leader? I cannot be mistaken in thinking that the farmer of

today, and particularly the young farmer of today, is just waiting to become the layman of tomorrow. Have I not seen hundreds of these young farmers at our agricultural colleges, illuminated with the spirit of God, responding to the appeal of the gospel? We shall not forget that every man in possession of a Bible has a key to the secret place of the Most High, and can, without priest or church, commune with God, his Maker. And we shall not, I think, long blame the farmer who holds aloof from the rural church of today, in spiritual loneliness, until a rural church, more clearly manifesting Christ, arises.

The potential layman of tomorrow, it seems to me, pleads with the general church for a vitalized medium to which, body and soul, he may devote himself. The foundation belief in the immortal souls of men, of all men, alongside the persistent love of God, is the heart of the gospel as I know it. I shall continue, as long as I live, to believe that the ordinary American farmer and his wife and children are just the timber out of which to build a real Christian church.

With their fundamental faith in God and their religious potentialities, it is equally possible to think of rural people in terms of a volunteer leadership, for the direct purpose of lay evangelism. A passage of scripture comes to my mind as I reflect on this great need of volunteer leaders. "I will give thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them." (*Isaiah 36:8.*) There is no lack of horses—means whereby the church might perform the task of Christian service; it is largely a failure "to set riders upon them." We need to spread



the idea that every contact is an opportunity for Christian service, and that every man or woman who has the spirit of Christ should be expected to use these contacts. Rural America is sorely in need of a new spiritual dynamic. The problem in the last analysis is a problem of people; it is human, but the human problem is a religious one. More than ever our problems are primarily concerned with human relations, and these in turn are rooted in man's relation to God. Rural laymen can help, in the spirit of Christian service, to solve these problems.

The outlook for leadership in the rural church is not a rosy one, unless we view it through eyes of faith. There is need of immediate and aggressive action, of improved educational standards in the rural ministry. The following report goes to the heart of the situation:

Of the 25,000 city ministers among the 17 white Protestant bodies, only 20 per cent reported that they were not graduates of either college or seminary, while more than half—52 per cent—claimed to be graduates of both. In rural areas, however, these proportions are virtually reversed. Returns from 46,000 Protestant country pastors show that only 23 per cent were graduates of both college and seminary, and that more than half—53 per cent—were not graduates of either.<sup>1</sup>

This condition, of course, reflects the old pioneer life, when neither preacher nor people were highly

<sup>1</sup>Fry, C. Luther, *The U. S. Looks at Its Churches*, pp. 64 and 66. New York, Institute of Social and Religious Research. 1930.



educated. But a change has taken place, and there is hardly a rural church that has not high school and college graduates in its congregation. It is not the intention here to reflect unfavorably upon all preachers who have not had the advantages of higher education; there are men whose formal education has been neglected, but who in intelligence and culture surpass those who have had all the scholastic advantages. But the situation in American rural life today urgently demands leaders who will give time to self-education and to wide reading in current social, economic and religious literature, and who will seek to acquire an understanding of the forces in rural life and the problems of rural people. With such leadership, consecrated to the service of Jesus Christ, the kingdom can be built in rural America.

## VII: RURAL GROUPS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

**I**T IS not enough to emphasize the unique character and needs of rural life and its church; it is also necessary to point out that rural life is not uniformly the same but, as in urban life, has its special groups and their problems which call for a special study and technique. Among these are the Negroes, the American Indians, the Southern highlanders, the migratory workers, the sharecroppers, and dwellers in some rural industrial and mining communities.

Because of conditions of race, vocational interest or geographical location, many of the people in these groups are unable to provide for themselves a minimum of those cultural, educational and religious essentials that are basic in our American life. What is to be the ultimate destiny of these underprivileged citizens? Upon certain of them, the migrant and the Negro and the white sharecropper in particular, communistic propaganda is making an impact. Unless the church can find ways and means to meet the terrific problems of poverty and social maladjustment

that beset these groups, the communist will continue to win them.

#### THE RURAL NEGRO

The Negroes have been for the most part rural dwellers. More of them are still in the country than in the city, but a rapid transition is taking place. The recent census in the rural South reveals that the Negro is disappearing from the farms. Between 1925 and 1935 the number of Negro farmers in North Carolina decreased by 7,500, about 9.8 per cent. The number of white farmers increased 28,785, or 14.2 per cent, in the same period. This represents the largest decrease of Negro farmers and the largest increase of white farmers in recent history. This does not augur well for our Negro population. In the final analysis those population groups which keep close to the land are the ones that will survive.

The cause and the significance of this exodus of Negroes to the city are problems that deserve our most careful study. While this transition has taken place in a more dramatic way in the South, where the desertion of the farms has been confined almost wholly to the Negro race, it is by no means exclusively a Southern problem. It is of prime importance to the church. The Negro has been the most religious group in America. He has made his significant contribution to our religious life in the Negro spirituals. The revolution taking place in agriculture is affecting

the Negro more seriously than it is affecting any other group in rural society. The Negro has always been a marginal farmer and susceptible to the transient<sup>2</sup> conditions of agriculture, but the depression conditions in cotton and tobacco have intensified these problems of transiency.

Professor Newell D. Eason, of Shaw University, in a study of the Negro of North Carolina, and his exodus to the cities, discusses the causes of this migration:

Why has the desertion of the farms been confined almost wholly to the Negro race? Their own answers show that landlords could not longer finance them, which fact drove many away, while others indicated that per annum costs of credit through the use of merchant credit placed too heavy a burden on them. Others stated that they left because land owners signed the average reduction contracts. . . . Others left because the landlords wanted to turn them into day laborers.<sup>1</sup>

Some Negroes, of course, have been lured to the city by the same enticements that attract the rural white folk—the bright lights and the glitter of urban life; the lure of employment during periods of intensive production by industry, that would give them a chance to secure more of the better things of life. In most instances they have been fooled. The depression slackened and, in many cases, stopped the feverish industrial activity. Negroes now find them-

<sup>1</sup>Eason, Newell D., "The Negro of North Carolina Forsakes the Land," *Opportunity*, April, 1936, p. 117.

selves in the slums of the Northern cities. Many of them are on relief, but their future is a very precarious one. Whether they have improved their outlook is questionable. In the city they expected to find escape from serfdom, a career, a chance for education, for culture, leisure and recreation. To the young Negro who has received some education, these are values that make a strong appeal. Many of these young Negroes in the city have expressed their disillusionment. Instead of the benefits of urban life they find themselves facing unemployment and poverty. The anticipated education is beyond their means, and the culture goes no further than cheap movies and bad liquor. Some way must be found to keep the Negro upon the land. The possibilities of a self-sustaining life for him are greater on the land than in the city. The church must take an active part in the rehabilitation of the Negro in agriculture.

The following quotations from Professor Eason's survey of the Negroes of North Carolina will suggest some of the conditions that must be remedied. From Pitt County, where there was a 25.4 per cent decrease in Negro farmers, he quotes a Negro observer's report of February, 1933:

"Tenants in this section are getting along poorly. They have difficulty in securing someone to furnish them with farming necessities. Many will be unable to farm this year for this reason. Negroes are in a worse condition than whites, for many of them are made to vacate houses

and jobs to be replaced by whites. In some instances two and three families are living in one house. Conditions are growing gradually worse."

Here is what Professor Eason says of the economic conditions behind these migrations:

In some instances land owners have substituted day labor in place of the sharecropper type of farming. The reaction of many young Negro farmers is that they would rather be working in a mill in the city for \$1.04 a day than as a farm day laborer for thirty cents a day. It is not surprising that they beat a wide track to the Southern cotton and tobacco mills and the Northern cities at their first opportunities. . . .

In Person County there was a 19.1 per cent decrease in Negro farmers between 1930 and 1935. The Negroes of this county composed 38.9 per cent of the population. In 1933, however, they made up 57 per cent of the relief load. In Forsyth County there was a 28 per cent decrease in Negro farm operators. The Negroes of that county made up 33.3 per cent of the population, yet they made up 44 per cent of the relief load. Twenty-one per cent of the population of that county getting relief were Negroes as compared with 14 per cent white.

Professor Eason then indicates the resulting urban problem:

Females and the children of tenants and sharecroppers are among the largest numbers leaving the farm. Most of them are found flocking into New York, Philadelphia, Washington and Baltimore. The United States census shows that these four cities are drawing Negroes heavily



from North Carolina. They are perhaps North Carolina's healthiest and most capable young Negroes.

The difficulties involved in trying to maintain a rural church under such conditions are almost beyond description. That a ministry to such a group is a primary and imperative responsibility of home missions is also too clearly evident to need any further emphasis. The point we would press is that the church must do more than merely provide a ministry to these depressed, dispossessed, and discouraged people. It must find a way to bore into the basic problem and to deal with the causes of the conditions that have just been described. As long as the Negroes in great numbers are steeped in this dismal poverty there is little hope that the church can do much with them or for them. We, as members of the Christian church, must honestly face these problems of social injustice and maladjustments that are consequent upon such conditions.

To redress these unfortunate conditions is one of the imperatives now resting upon the church, whose members are often in a position to do so directly and effectively. The best interests of the Negro and of society can be served by making life secure, satisfying and wholesome on the farm. The church must set as one of its major tasks the providing of an environment more favorable to the growth of the finer qualities of manhood and womanhood. To achieve



this it will be necessary to consider several basic changes.

Home and land ownership must be put within the reach of the Negro. Among the reasons for the desertion of the land is the urge to freedom. One of the major expressions of freedom is home ownership and land occupancy under security. A second need is that of sound credit. There is no hope for the Negro on the land unless this can be made possible. This is one service that could be provided by the Federal government. A third need is that of holding out to the Negro on the land better educational facilities than are now offered him, an education that is associated with the business of farming. Agriculture must be understood and developed as a culture if the general economic advantages of any rural community are to be improved. Training in cooperative methods of production, marketing, credit and consumption will also be included in this educational program for the rural Negro. Improvement in the use of these methods will help to make farm life attractive and compensatory. Some attempts are now being made to deal with this problem. One of them, the Delta Cooperative Farm, has been described in Chapter Three. This project, initiated for both Negro and white sharecroppers, is now well under way, and it is understood to be only the forerunner of similar developments for Negro sharecroppers and farmers

who have spent their lives on the farm and desire to stay there.

#### THE AMERICAN INDIAN

If we are to understand the American Indian of today we must keep in mind his rural background. The everyday life of the Indian has been powerfully influenced by his ancestors' nomadic habits, which were essentially of the most primitive rural type. Many habits, customs and tribal ways of this primitive past are found today in the organization and life of the Indians. This rural life was not the settled type that characterized the pioneer farmers, but was marked by a spirit of wanderlust, which exerted a very powerful influence on the social organization and habits of early American Indian life. This nomadic migratory life was closely related to the seasons, to trapping, hunting and fishing, and not to the more stable agricultural conditions which are today the foundation of rural life. The Indian has never been an agriculturist in the accepted sense of that term. Long accustomed to taking from an abundant nature without being obliged to put back and maintain fertility, such agriculture as he has since engaged in has been of the subsistence kind.

As a result of more than one generation of settled life, the younger Indians are taking a more practical interest in scientific agriculture and in the development of community life. Stock raising appeals to the

younger Indians. They make good cowboys, they are fond of horses, and they are taking their place in the rodeos and fairs where cattle and horses are in evidence. One of the most promising features of the government's Reorganization Act is the provision for cattlemen's associations among Indians. It will require time to reap the benefits of the new provisions that are included for the securing of land.

The Indian has always been a land man. He still has land in spite of the recent propaganda to the contrary. He leases too much and, in the past, has been too easily persuaded to sell his land for a mere song. But the attempt now being made to re-establish the Indian on a more secure foundation on the land, with better supervision and training for agricultural development, is a step in the right direction. Everything will depend upon the success the government can achieve in the better use of these lands. The hope for the economic rehabilitation of the Indian lies in his being helped to appreciate the value of work and thrift. This is true in both agriculture and industry. He has been a light-hearted economist—easy come, easy go. With his roving instincts still alive, his sense of ownership has been but slowly developed.

The young Indian is facing some terrific problems. Misunderstood at home, in his community and in the nation, he stands between the old civilization of his parents and that of the white man. He is involved in both, but in a sense does not belong to either. In

school he has learned new things about which his family does not even dream. He longs to go forward to take his place in the new life that is opening up before him. He is being unmade for the kind of rural life in which he lives, and from which it will be very difficult for him to find release. Meanwhile, in spite of all those things, he is held down by the civilization of his ancestors. He has been taught to reverence the ancient wisdom and traditions. The white people who are his neighbors, and who might help him in his bewildering difficulties are, unfortunately, not interested in his welfare, or are interested only for selfish purposes—for graft and exploitation. Off the reservation it is not quite so difficult; but on the reservation the Indian is isolated from the contacts and culture of the new life, and, while gradually losing the culture of the old Indian civilization, he finds no wholesome social activity to enrich his life. The old motif is fast fading and he gropes for a new pattern. What is he to do?

It would seem that the first answer to the question would be to help the Indian youth to build a more satisfying rural life where he is; to hold out to him the hope of developing a rural life that would make possible an outlet for his increasing education and culture. The church should cooperate, wherever possible, with the government to bring a greater measure of economic security to the Indian by way of a

land program and a more stable attitude toward agriculture.

#### THE SOUTHERN HIGHLANDER

Many elements enter into the situation that constitutes the problem of mountain people, but they all resolve themselves into one overshadowing rural problem. In recent years there have developed rural industrial situations in the mountains that are about as degrading as can be found in the most congested cities. But, for the most part, the highlander is struggling with the problems of a primitive agriculture, poor schools and churches, the absence of medical care and an adequate health program—all those services that go to the making of a wholesome, satisfying, abundant life. Most of these conditions can be traced to isolation, but in spite of the fact that improved transportation facilities are enabling mountain people to escape from their former remoteness, many of these problems still remain to be overcome. They are primarily the difficulties that are related to poor agriculture and an undeveloped rural life. Eighty-one per cent of all mountain people—some seven million—live under these conditions. In Georgia eighty-five per cent, in North Carolina eight-nine per cent, and in Kentucky and Tennessee ninety per cent, of the people of the total mountain area are of the underprivileged rural type. They are among the neediest groups in rural America.

Much fine work has been done among them. The mission boards of the various denominations have established mission centers, with schools, churches, medical work, training in agricultural and industrial arts, and the cultural services that make for a better developed civilization. There still remains, however, a vast population yet to be reached by these more constructive religious and social activities, and because of the conditions that have come in the trail of the depression, the church must act quickly to deal with the situation.

The chief problem here as elsewhere is that of youth. The mountain people have large families. To find eight or ten children in a mountain cabin is a common experience. In former years the developing industrial cities and the great metropolitan centers provided the outlet for most of these young people. Where can they go, now that these places no longer need them? There is but one immediate answer to this question. Many more of these young people must be trained in the appreciation of a better rural life and agriculture that will enable them to develop a self-supporting and self-respecting civilization within the nearby communities. This is already taking place in numerous mountain communities. The government with its resettlement and rehabilitation program, with the cooperation of the mission boards, is making some progress along these lines. The Cumberland homesteads in Tennessee, and the



homestead developments at Reedsville, West Virginia, are a type of the projects that offer much hope for the young people of these mountain regions.

Like the Indians, the mountain people have never been farmers in the sense in which we usually think of farming. Hunting, trapping and enough agriculture to supply the bare needs, with a very limited variety of foods, have sufficed. Mountain people are still in the pioneering stage, living without many of the conveniences that are now considered necessities in the more normal communities. Life has been conditioned, for the most part, by isolation. This economic life is made exceedingly difficult by the poor soil and the steep hillsides where agriculture provides a hand-to-mouth existence. On many a cornfield the hoe is the only implement needed to plant and cultivate the crop. This type of farming is passing, and the youth of the mountains is looking forward to a more hopeful and compensating economic life as he acquires a new outlook through better training in scientific agriculture. Already he glimpses the possibilities of a satisfying, cultural community life.

The church must make greater progress in its program for better agricultural methods, schools, health and citizenship among these people. But the primary problem is that of agricultural education. Once that basic problem nears a solution we can look forward with greater hope to the future of the mountain people.



## THE MIGRATORY WORKER

Another of the distressed and poverty-stricken groups in rural America is that of the migratory workers. The years of the depression, the difficulties under which these people work, and the conditions described in this study, have also driven hundreds of sharecroppers and tenant farmers into their ranks. Thus a new type of migrant is gradually taking the field, bringing new problems and calling for the sympathy and service of a social and religious ministry.

The migrants of yesterday were, for the most part, families with settled abode in some city, but going out during the summer months to work in the harvest. In other sections of the country there were families moving throughout the year from crop to crop. In many cases they were foreigners just coming into the country, and in immediate need of a job. No knowledge of the English language was necessary. It was possible to get access to the country to pick the cotton and the cranberries without the exacting conditions of citizenship or residence credentials that are now required; so that the newcomer embarked upon the life of a casual laborer of the most haphazard and itinerant type, accepting, without complaint, the conditions in which he was obliged to make his precarious living. The migratory worker of yesterday was not easily moved by radical leaders, and, in spite of the tragic conditions under which he

worked, he did not respond readily to the communist or to other professional agitators.

In the years following 1930, a new group of dispossessed appeared. They came from economic and cultural levels which are entirely different from those of the old type of migrant. They had been forced out of the more definite security of farm ownership, of the farm tenant and the sharecropper with a settled abode; and they took refuge in the only way of securing a livelihood that seemed to be open to them, in the seasonal labor camps of the agricultural areas.

These farmers who have joined the army of migrants are bitter and angry. They feel that something is wrong, that society is against them, and that the nation does not seem to care what happens to the tiller of the soil. So it is that the migrant groups are rich soil for the communist and the firebrand agitator, and, unless something can be done to improve conditions, the migrant worker will follow any leadership that seems to offer a solution of his immediate problems. The dispossessed sharecroppers and tenant farmers are in revolt. Thrust from the land, they have gone out hating the government; and, after a struggle to get relocated, they have finally given up and taken to the highway with the thousands who, in recent years, have joined the ranks of that drifting army which moves from place to place in search of a precarious livelihood.

The following statement from Miss Adela J. Bal-

lard, Western supervisor of migrant work for the Council of Women for Home Missions, vividly describes the conditions that prevail:

Thrust out from their pitiful shacks as casual laborers, the sharecroppers and tenants have drifted over into the cotton fields of Arizona. Then on they travel over the state line into the Imperial Valley of California, where the early vegetables are harvested. Still later, the mob moves northward, on and on until the ending of the year may find them over in Idaho or Washington harvesting the potatoes or apples. The migrant worker is following the gleam of a new freedom, but with an increasing hatred of all state and national regulations. The sharecropper feels that a dominant class has displaced him, and he resents it more and more as the days go by.

In the West the Mexican who, in the past, represented the principal race employed in migrant work, and who had depended upon this kind of agricultural work as his sole income, now finds himself in competition with the white sharecropper who has recently come into the field. In other sections it is the Filipino and the Indian with whom the newcomer is in conflict. To most of the white people who have taken to migrant work, these dark-skinned people are all foreigners, and hence a new race antagonism is born in the hearts of these groups.

To provide a religious ministry for such groups is a most difficult, but a most needed service. It is hardly necessary to point out that it is impossible for any one denomination or church to deal with a problem

of these dimensions. Nothing less than the churches working under a single leadership, and with a common program, could begin to cope with the need that exists among such groups. To the Council of Women for Home Missions has been committed the task of making available to these migrant workers some minimum, at least, of a religious ministry. It has spent much time and money in the study of the problem, and in developing centers from which a service to the larger group may be made possible.

In its attempt to meet the needs of this group the Council has recognized several very important factors. First, that under the present system of agriculture and industry the migratory worker is inevitable; that, so long as the system continues, there will be the obligation to provide a ministry and service for these unfortunate people. Second, that it is necessary to keep before the churches the evils that are inherent in the system, and to create a public opinion that will ultimately outlaw such migratory labor. Third, that, while admitting the evils of the system, the Council shall, in the interval of change, study ways and means to lessen these evils which attend an aimless migration from place to place, and offer them the largest possible ministry of the gospel.

One of the most encouraging features of this ministry is the growth of cooperation on the part of denominations and church agencies. Here they discover

a means of common service that supersedes the limits of creed, doctrine and dogma. Even those with the most conservative religious views are willing to join in this ministry to these neglected and unfortunate people. Here is a service that does not require the giving up of any theological principle or the surrender of any denominational interests. It calls for the acceptance of a common task with an evangelistic motive at the heart of all the service that is rendered, in order that the spirit of Christ may be made available for these, our fellow citizens, who otherwise would be left more neglected, forlorn and depressed.

#### THE MEXICAN

The Mexicans are also one of the special groups to be considered in the rural field. While they are being increasingly employed in industry—for the Mexicans have real aptitudes for mechanical work—yet their main interest and employment is in the agricultural and horticultural vocations. They are, for the most part, unskilled laborers, and naturally we find them in the Southern and Western states near the Mexican border. They have become a necessity to the truck and fruit farms and ranches of California and the Southwest. It is estimated that Mexicans pick annually in California 250,000 tons of raisins, 25,000 tons of walnuts, 5,000,000 boxes of lemons and 25,000,000 boxes of oranges. Last year

the citrus crop was valued at \$300,000,000. Every orange and lemon must now be clipped with shears.

While the labor market is not so active as it was ten years ago, the fact remains that we have built up an agricultural program in the Southwest that is, in the main, dependent upon the labor of these Mexicans. Thousands of them have literally dug and hoed their way into the life of Southwestern America. We offered inducements in the early days to bring them here to work in the fields. We are obligated to provide them with the essential needs of life. They have given what they have. We must care for their physical and spiritual needs. They have large families. One missionary recently reported a visit to a Mexican home in his territory where he found a mother with twenty-six children. Moral conditions in the walnut and sugar beet sections are most undesirable.

One of the difficulties that the missionaries face is that of securing sufficient funds to meet the expense involved in visiting these outlying camps where the Mexican workers are engaged in harvesting the fruit, nut and vegetable crops. These workers are part of rural America. Their children are born in the beet field, the orchard and the truck garden areas. They have been neglected. We must now find a way to understand them better and to minister to them more wisely. Many of them are American citizens, and need our help in order to take their place in society and become a more definite part of our national life.



## THE FILIPINO

The Filipinos in the United States number about 60,000. They are to be found around the great centers of the West, such as Seattle, San Francisco, Sacramento, Stockton, Salinas and Los Angeles. But they are engaged primarily in agriculture, and during the planting, cultivating and harvest seasons they are scattered all through the agricultural valleys of California, Oregon and Washington. While many of them are included among the migrant workers and must be considered in the program for that group, it should also be noted that more of them are to be found in Filipino colonies and hence must be considered as a special group with distinct problems and needs. There is now a restriction on Philippine immigration so that few Filipinos are coming to the United States. On the other hand, few are returning home; instead, there is a marked tendency for Filipino young men to marry and establish homes here in the United States.

The racial tie is strong. Because of the attitude of the whites and other groups toward them, this sense of racial solidarity has been strengthened among the Filipinos. It is therefore necessary to think of them and plan for them in terms of certain racial characteristics and conditions that are peculiar to them as an alien group.

The first influx of Filipinos came by way of the Hawaiian Islands, where some 64,000 of them were



engaged in the sugar plantations. Today they constitute about two-thirds of the labor supply of the islands. From Hawaii they came to the Pacific coast where, during the last twenty years, there has been unlimited opportunity for labor in the truck gardens and the orchards. During the boom days, when high wages were paid for skilled labor, thousands of Filipinos came and were welcome because they were willing to perform, at low wages, the menial tasks in the fields, in the fishing industry and in the canneries. Since the depression came upon us they have had a difficult time, inasmuch as white labor has demanded these jobs and has also been willing to work for low wages.

Until recently there has been little or no restriction upon the entry of Filipinos into the United States; the usual head tax was not required of those who entered, inasmuch as the Filipinos were wards of the United States. Filipinos cannot become citizens of the country unless they have given at least three years in some branch of military service.

Ninety per cent of them are men, and most of them are young. This, of course, creates a great social problem, but the Filipinos are no more immoral or criminal or diseased than are other races. They compare favorably with our own American men. These lonely, ostracized men desire social life and fellowship. The cheap dance halls, the houses of ill repute,

and the gambling dens make a bid for their souls. Our better homes, our social circles and our churches are often not open to them. They lack home life, and often live in congested quarters on the ranches and also in the cities during the winter when they are idle. Here in the city slums the Filipino occupies a cheap room, poorly lighted and badly ventilated. It is not a matter of surprise if he falls a prey to immorality and disease. A good start has been made by several of the mission boards to reach the Filipinos with a ministry of social and religious service. The Presbyterian, Christian and Methodist mission boards are sponsoring Christian fellowships among them. The fellowship idea seems the best way to bring to them a religious ministry. The transient nature of much of their work, in the country in summer, in the city in winter, makes necessary a somewhat flexible ministry and leadership. This calls for an evangelism of the most friendly and constructive type, which the Christian fellowships of the mission boards are seeking to provide. Their aim is to treat all Filipinos in our midst as brothers in Christ, to give them some larger and more wholesome outlet for their social life, to remove as far as possible the ostracism because of race and color, so that as they continue to work in the fields and in the fishing industry they may get a new sense of a Christian America of which they are now a part.

## RURAL MINING COMMUNITIES

Usually, when we speak of rural people, we have in mind agricultural folk; but there are other important groups of rural communities, such as those in the mining areas. There, the source of livelihood is still the soil, but the miner goes more deeply into it than does the farmer. These communities, many of them engaged in the mining of coal, are to be found in Kentucky, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Alabama, Tennessee, Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, Kansas, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, California, Montana and some other states. The social conditions in many of these mining centers are bad. In spite of all our so-called modern progress, mining in some of these rural communities remains about the most hopeless, hideous thing in our contemporary industrial life. The transition from agriculture, even of the poor mountain type, to this industrial mining is a very perilous one. Any change from agriculture to industrial development is always accompanied by grave dangers to the ideals and morals of the community. But, when industrial developments such as those of a mining community are thrust upon a backward people, and are not conducted for the good of the people but for the benefit of exploiters, then the danger is great indeed. A ferocious and destructive social system has been forced upon an unprepared and defenseless people, who are vulnerable because they have been uprooted.

The average rural mining village is about as dispiriting, unlovely and degrading a place as any to be found in rural America. Many of these towns, ten to fifteen years ago, were boom towns. The homes were "jerry-built" and the towns are quickly falling into ruins. In the smaller towns and villages of the mountain sections the cabins and shacks that were quickly erected on the hillsides are now sagging on their rickety foundations. Tipples, mine runways and office buildings, that were throbbing with life some years ago, are now covered with black dust and are rapidly going into decay.

A student of mining conditions says in a magazine article: "In this place, civilization has become a disease. The towns are disease towns." In the towns and villages where mining has ceased it is impossible to describe conditions. They are, for the most part, off the beaten track, and many of them are hidden away in remote gulches and up mountain creeks. They are conveniently out of sight, and therefore out of mind.

The people are living from hand to mouth, mostly as objects of charity. They are trying to raise some vegetables, chickens and pigs, but it is a hard struggle. The soil is poor; much of it has been washed out. Their methods are unscientific. They are further handicapped because of lack of fertilizer, tools and seed. The Red Cross, the American Friends Service Society, and the Save the Children Fund, together

with the mission boards of the churches, have been making some attempt to help, but there is too serious a lack of a constructive and organized cooperative effort to make a real contribution to the problem.

These mining towns have been in the throes of turmoil and strikes for years. Even in the so-called days of prosperity they were poverty-stricken because of strikes, lockouts and the frequent periods of unemployment. The people who were attracted to these mining camps were, in some instances, of inferior type, so that one finds in these communities a degree of ignorance, inefficiency and moral degeneracy that it would be difficult to match in other industries and that renders them susceptible to exploitation.

It requires a virile stock to be able to survive the struggle for life that necessarily obtains in these mining towns and villages. The effect of isolation upon weak characters is likely to be the destruction of all respect for tradition, authority or social convention. A recent report of a study made in rural mining towns contains this remark: "These towns are invariably the headquarters of the 'off color' population of the larger towns and cities." They are often without police or any semblance of law and order. They set the type for a general free and easy style of manners and habits, out of which comes a ghastly wreck of character.

If the church fails to stand by these impoverished

and hopeless people in their hour of need, then it must not complain if they respond to other institutions that now bid for their allegiance. The communists have concentrated their attention on communities where pitched battles have been fought for the right of the miners to organize. Into these towns came the communists, fighting side by side with the miners, ready to go to jail or to be shot, in order to demonstrate their sympathy with, and their willingness to help, people who they believed were the victims of an unjust economic and political order. It is not a matter of surprise that the miners should love the communists, even though they do not understand the communist program or philosophy. Harlan, in Bell County, Kentucky, has been one of the hot spots in the battle for the miners. Conditions recently were so bad that an outsider could not enter without first submitting to a search. Men were being killed. Labor leaders, social workers and others interested in justice and philanthropy were beaten and driven out of the county.

The coal industry is sadly in need of economic and social control, but it will require something more drastic than has yet been tried to solve the problem. Thousands of miners in these villages are unemployed. There are too many mines and too much coal for the market demand. Hundreds of these mines should be closed and remain closed, and the miners



rehabilitated for some other type of industry or agriculture.

The most pitiful group in these mining towns is the children. Haggard and hungry, ill-clad and ignorant, they present a spectacle of poverty and need that is a standing disgrace to our great nation. The vast army of undernourished, uneducated, and abandoned children readily become the victims of crime and vice and disease. Our government must face immediately the task of at least protecting these little ones from the ravages of poverty and the vicissitudes of an economic life in which they are helpless.

The churches must be aroused to the urgency of the need for religious and social leadership to cope with the emergency that exists, to make plans for a more satisfying life, and to provide adequate equipment to meet the leisure and unemployment problems in these mining settlements. Summer-time programs for children are one of the outstanding needs. Home gardens, woodcraft, music, games, home economics, instruction in the remaking of used clothing, education in hygiene and health—these, and a multitude of other activities, provide an opportunity for the church and the social and welfare agencies.

The several responsible denominations whose churches are in proximity to these centers should get together and agree upon some common effort to reach those people with a broader ministry of the more abundant life.



## SOME SPECIAL RURAL NEEDS

It is difficult to draw the line between the groups making special demands on missionary agencies and the more normal types of rural and agricultural need. The past few years have seen the depletion of resources in many agricultural sections and have created conditions of missionary need that are, to say the least, tragic. Agricultural sections which, until recently, were thriving, have been reduced to poverty. Drought and dust have been responsible for some of this disaster, but even in the better agricultural sections farm owners have been reduced to a tenant status. Some of the best agricultural land is now so heavily mortgaged as to make it impossible for owners to meet their interest obligations and taxes, and still find enough to provide a minimum living standard. All of this has contributed to a new missionary situation in the more normal agricultural communities.

The nation-wide study just completed by one denomination regarding the unmet needs in home missions, and the new demands for Christian service because of changed conditions, bring to light some challenging facts and also some very interesting observations as to the types of ministry needed today. I am giving a number of these comments from rural superintendents as they appear in the correspondence conducted during the survey. These are selected from various parts of the country and thus reveal the nation-wide need.

"There are many school districts where there is not a church family. More might be reached if we went to them rather than asking them to come to us."

"There are three thousand boys and girls in my district not connected with any church or Sunday school. I need special workers for young people and daily vacation schools."

Some of the social and religious handicaps are shown in the following:

"Many of my country churches have closed because of the change from ownership to tenant farmers. The population is a shifting one, except in the case of those who have bought small farms, and these are too small to make a decent living. We have become desperate, and have one man on the field who is doing evangelistic work of a purely missionary type. We have what we call neck-places between the rivers or small bays—that are unchurched. They are not profitable from a salary standpoint, but are poor communities, purely missionary fields. My guess is that there are five thousand boys and girls scattered over the six counties which I serve who are not connected with any church or Sunday school. Give me some itinerant workers who will circulate in these back districts and we will work wonders."

The desperate condition of the church may be glimpsed in the following word pictures:

"Several circuits have been joined together because they could no longer support a pastor alone. In some cases churches were abandoned in the hope that the people would go to the larger church in town, but it only works for a while; then comes neglect and, as a result,

quite a number of people lose any connection with the church. There are sections lying between large circuits which have large numbers of people who are unchurched. The larger parish idea with sufficient additional workers would help solve these situations."

"One small hamlet is now unserved by any church. It had been a mining community; when the mine closed, the people were left stranded. Some of them have moved away. From my viewpoint, if religious workers, acquainted with rural life, work and habits, could be employed to go into these communities to interest and help the people, they would progress and the communities would take out a new lease on life."

These are but a few out of more than three hundred reports. They tell us in no uncertain terms that rural America is a great missionary field, and they should not fail to arouse our Christian conscience. In many ways the story is tragic in its depression and discouragement. One report seems to sum up an impression which is typical of them all: "There are sections of our rural population that are fast becoming pagan, not only without religious ministrations, but getting to that point where they do not miss it."

On the other hand, that the reports stress the need of a different type of program and leadership is a most hopeful sign. They reveal a new attitude on the part of an increasing number of those who are responsible for the supervision of the churches, and show that they are alive to the new situation and conscious of the crisis that exists in rural life and the rural church.

## VIII: THE RURAL CHURCH AND THE NEW DAY

**S**HORTLY after the World War, Sir Auckland Geddes, British ambassador to the United States, said to an American audience: "In Europe we know that an age is dying. Here in America it would be easy to miss the signs of the coming change, but I have little doubt that it will come."

The events since that time have more than justified that statement, but there are still those who refuse to believe that any fundamental change in society is taking place. It was the same before the fall of the Roman Empire, before the French Revolution, and before every historic collapse of a nation's life or the breakdown of the world's economic system. Those who were advantaged by the existing conditions desired them to continue; they refused to believe that anything was wrong, that any change was necessary. Those who were at a disadvantage (and that usually meant a great majority of the people) desired that something different should be established as the dominant influence of a nation's life and

as a means whereby the masses of the people could secure a better living. Members of this group have now become articulate, and are beginning to express themselves in every leading country. As the poet says:

For each age is a dream that is dying,  
Or one that is coming to birth.

Toward the profound changes sweeping across the world, and particularly as they affect the life of America, the church and the home missionary enterprise must address themselves. In so doing it is natural and proper that rural interests shall occupy an important place in the great program that will inevitably demand attention and action.

The church and home missions in America began as a rural enterprise. The westward movement, with its ever expanding frontiers, its adventuring, pioneering exploits of human daring, was accompanied by similar exploits of missionary zeal and sacrifice. Our pioneers dreamed of America as a land of ultimate freedom and plenty, and sacrificed in order that their dreams might come true. In all of that the missionary played an important part. He, too, was a pioneer, an adventurer, dreaming of an America of freedom and plenty. He, too, sacrificed in order to make his dreams come true, but he saw that such an America must be founded on a knowledge and love of God.

This first period was overlapped and followed by

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the second, which we know as the industrial revolution, with its phases of hope and progress linked with fear, despair and distress. Its story is that of the rapid rise of commerce and mechanical manufacture through a series of inventions of machines to perform work which human hands had done before. This industrial revolution was, in some of its aspects, an age of progress, but the coming of the machine brought new distress to the poor, and it has not ushered in the looked-for Utopia.

The old physical and geographical frontiers of America are now at an end, but we are faced with other frontiers, economic, social and spiritual, that also call for the spirit of adventure and pioneering. We are turning from physical rural adventure to social rural adventure. These new frontiers also call for pioneering programs in home missions as daring and adventurous as anything that characterized the ministries of earlier heroes. What are some of the factors in the rural situation with which the church must deal as it contemplates the new America that is slowly but surely emerging?

### THE QUESTION OF PASTORS' SALARIES

The salary situation among the rural ministry is one of the first problems that should engage the attention of American Christians. Present conditions are a standing rebuke to the church. Unless we can bring about some drastic change, making possible a more

equitable and more adequate salary for ministers and looking toward a definite minimum for qualified men, then there is little hope for a more vital country church. The church will always reflect its minister, so that all that has been said as to the program and progress of the rural church and rural life is very closely related to the salary situation.

The church in general is having much to say on matters involving economic injustice and social inequality in the economic realm. This is as it should be. The church must ever be dropping the plumb line of the gospel against the prevailing inequities and the gross economic injustices of the day. As a rule the pastors of the large city churches who receive the large salaries are the men who lead out in these indictments against the social order. I am glad that they do. They are the logical people to lead in this crusade. Many of them have faced, and are now facing, great personal risk and loss because of their stand, and to all such we owe a debt of gratitude. Some of these pastors who are in the higher salary range have gone further and have introduced plans whereby some sharing process might take place in the brotherhood of the ministry. Again, the rural clergy appreciate this interest and effort on the part of the better-paid men.

But, thus far, the church has failed to deal adequately with a most glaring economic injustice within the ministry, and one which presses heavily upon



the rural ministers. Not only is this creating conditions of abject poverty with all its consequences in the homes of those poorly paid pastors, but, more serious problems of bitterness and lack of confidence and unity are also in the making. What hope is there that the world will take notice of our preachments on social righteousness and economic justice, if part of the ministry itself is suffering from economic injustice?

Surely the responsibility to remedy this urgent salary situation lies heavily although not exclusively upon the shoulders of the ministry. I am not pleading for equality. Under the varying conditions of the work in a country so vast in territory, and so different in its demands, there can be no such thing as a flat equality. But equity there must be, if the church is to continue, if it is to have any real influence on the great issues before the nation, and if it is to speak out boldly about the sins of society. This question must be kept before the church until some more satisfactory solution is found and acted upon.

Recent studies show that town and country churches have a large proportion of younger pastors who have heavy family obligations. They find it an absolute necessity to keep an automobile if they are to do their work adequately and reach their people. It takes from a quarter to a third of the salary to provide the fuel and upkeep for the average rural pastor's car. When this has been deducted from the

cash salary, the picture is, to say the least, pitiful. Equity in salary would require that some provision be made for this necessary item of transportation expense. There is a pathetic neglect of the isolated rural churches today, just because ministers cannot afford to buy gasoline and provide automobile upkeep. It constitutes a missionary problem of considerable importance.

To supplement a pastor's salary on the basis of certain minimum standards without making due provision for these expenses of covering the field is quite unsatisfactory. A city pastor recently said, "When I was a rural pastor, the people fed my horse and filled my cellar with food to last me all the winter." But farmers in these days do not fill gasoline tanks, neither do they, as a general custom, put the winter's vegetables, potatoes, and meat into the preacher's cellar. Where these things are given, they are, in many parishes, evaluated and charged as cash against the salary.

Various experiments are going forward in sharing, pooling salaries, or making assessments, in order to provide funds for the purpose of achieving a more equitable support for country ministers. Plans must be sufficiently elastic. They should take into account all the necessary factors of the local situation. Minimum standards will vary; no flat minimum can be established. But there are some principles and pro-

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cedures that enter into the situation which should receive careful consideration.

First, a survey of the community to be served should be made, in collaboration with experts in survey technique, with a view to any necessary consolidation of churches and their activities; this data will indicate the means of securing the largest amount of local self-support without depriving still more people of religious ministry. A second step is that of dealing definitely and drastically with the problem of inefficiency. This would include both churches and pastors. Inefficiency is no easy matter to deal with, but that should not prevent us from taking every necessary step to make available for the rural church a ministry of the highest calibre. Such a ministry would be a real challenge to the larger churches to share with the smaller in the support of their pastors.

Ultimately, a pooling arrangement of pastors' salaries may be necessary in order to appeal to laymen to consider their obligation to the total ministerial group. This adjustment of ministers' salaries probably cannot be made on any flat assessment or a pooling of total salaries such as obtains among certain denominations in European countries. It will require a sliding-scale basis of assessment. Many such plans are now operating with fair success. They usually begin with a small personal assessment of about one per cent on salaries of \$1,500 and under \$2,000, and

rise gradually to three or four per cent on salaries of \$5,000 or over. That paves the way for a similar assessment on a sliding scale, upon the churches themselves, thus enabling the strong to help the weak. The appeal to churches must have regard to the size of the church, its membership, its budget, its pastor's salary. Churches paying less than the recognized average should be exempt, and those paying more should be assessed upon a gradual increase for each five hundred or one thousand dollars of salary.

A recent study of the salary situation in one of the large denominations suggests the almost staggering need of an adjustment in salaries on some one of the plans proposed. Some 14,000 ministers were involved in the study and the figures include house rent on a sliding scale. There were 147 salaries of over \$5,000, a few rising as high as \$10,000; 1,630 were between \$750 and \$1,000; 1,565 were between \$500 and \$750; 3,112 were under \$500. A total of 6,307 pastors were receiving less than \$1,000, including house rent. Of these about 2,000 were students or part-time pastors, and some of them were able to supplement their salaries with what they earned outside the ministry, leaving over 4,000 full-time men receiving under \$1,000 a year, which included house rent. Studies in other denominations would reveal somewhat similar conditions.

The total pooling of all salaries in a denomination, and their distribution on some basis of equality

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or sliding scale of equity, may be necessary. This plan is in operation in Great Britain in the Presbyterian, Episcopal, Congregational and Methodist churches. The methods of securing the funds and distributing them vary in these denominations, but the basic principle holds good; namely, that the salaries of the ministers are a responsibility for the whole church and not merely of a local parish. The time is surely ripe for the American Protestant churches to tackle the whole question on this basis. There can be no argument as to the inequity and inefficiency of the present method. None, I think, will deny that the salaries paid to the rural ministers are woefully inadequate, and that something ought to be done about it.

The starting place is with the ministers. City pastors will appreciate the following facts: that what happens in the rural church will, in large measure, determine the life of the church in the city; that the country church must, of necessity, play a large part in determining denominational policies on a national scale; that the country community has educated children for the cities; that the country church has been the feeder for city churches and that this responsibility has been out of all proportion to its income or its ability to meet the expense; that the cost of operating a car and covering the work of a rural parish is great; and that in these recent years the cuts in salaries have fallen most heavily upon the rural pastors. If city pastors and their churches could

be made to see all these things, then I am sure that something would happen.

This salary question has great significance for the home mission boards. They have made a great contribution to the raising of the salary scale of rural ministers, and have been the agencies through which thousands of rural churches have been made available to people in isolated sections of the country and to people in rural America who have not had the economic resources to provide for their own ministry. These home mission agencies must continue to make such provision, if thousands of sorely needed country churches are to keep their doors open.

But, having recognized this fact and provided for this need, the entire task of meeting this salary problem should not be laid upon the doorstep of the national missions boards. Many of these underpaid ministers should be provided for without including them in the missionary appropriations. Some plan of adjustment should be devised to bring certain of these salaries to a recognized minimum. I have spent much time in the rural churches where these underpaid men are trying to serve. I have been in their homes, I have seen the suffering of their families and have witnessed the terrific handicaps under which they carry on. Their sacrifices are so great that the spirit of their ministry is crushed. Surely such conditions should stir the whole Christian church into action.

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The late Dr. Warren H. Wilson, of the Board of National Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A., an outstanding leader of the rural church and the whole rural life movement, made a valiant fight in behalf of the country minister. He worked out in detail a plan for a national fund for pastors' salaries to correct the inequalities of the present situation. He recommended that the fund should be made up of proportionate contributions from local churches, and from legacies and individual contributions; that a minimum salary should be established, and all pastors' salaries paid from this fund.

No single plan will meet all situations. But it is clear that of the many and difficult problems that overshadow the future of the country church, the first and most urgent is that of the pastor's salary. Not until that question has been faced, and some honest adjustment has been made to provide a decent living standard, which includes a reasonable budget for expenses, is there any clear hope that progress can be made.

### A NEW MINISTRY TO RURAL WOMEN

In the rebuilding of rural America there must be a new approach to the women on the farms. Homes in many rural communities are few and widely scattered. In some sections bad roads still make frequent contacts difficult. Then there is the lonesomeness and the longing for friendship that makes the life of rural



women more difficult than that of the men. The work of the men-folk takes them out where they can avail themselves of wider and more frequent social fellowship. This is an added reason for a more definite consideration of a ministry to the women of the country. This social hunger and this need for contacts with other women of the community are valid and reasonable. It is a spiritual as well as a social problem, and the rural pastor and his wife can render invaluable service if they will keep before them the objective of meeting the needs of rural women.

Here is a field of service in which the pastor's wife can be a great help. The women and girls of rural communities have numerous problems into which a man cannot and should not enter. By the nature of the case they call for the kindly, understanding ministry of some trained, consecrated woman. But there is a still larger ministry which involves education in the possibilities of enriching home and community life through rural womanhood. Some of this service should be of a voluntary character, since the average rural church does not support a woman assistant. However, many pastors' wives are already giving a devoted and self-sacrificing service in this kind of ministry, in spite of their own home and family responsibilities.

Many of the large city churches can provide the pastor with a woman worker, but rural communities have been given little consideration in the provision

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of deaconesses and other women workers. And they suffer from a need that is equally great. Here is a field of opportunity to which the national boards of home missions of the denominations should give more consideration. They should find a way to provide for rural fields consecrated women who have had training and experience in rural life and rural religion. The place and power of the women in rural life and the rural church demand and deserve the best that we can give them. City church women's groups, national women's societies, and the church at large would do well to give thought and prayer to this matter of bringing strength, support and inspiration to the women of the rural churches of America.

### A NEW APPRECIATION OF RURAL SANCTUARIES

The importance of buildings and equipment in a progressive program for the country church cannot be stressed too much. That the rural churches have survived, and have achieved what they have, in spite of their meager accommodations and equipment, is a fact that attests to some vital religious qualities in the personnel that has carried forward the work in the past. But in the country, as elsewhere, a new day has arrived, and it is unfair to expect that the future will produce results comparable to those of the past unless the country church can be assured at least a minimum of buildings and equipment suited to the

needs of a modern program of religious, social, recreational and community activities.

The budget of every church should include a designated amount for a fund that will be available for alterations and additions through the years. The tragedy of the present situation lies in the fact that little or nothing has been done to many rural churches during the past twenty-five years, sometimes during an even longer period. A pastor trained to carry on a fully rounded ministry will at times necessarily call upon his church for an expenditure far beyond the resources of a single year, if he is to put on a successful program. Much can be done, however, if some increasing provision is made annually for a wisely planned building program.

This program carried on over a period of time can well be made a fine evangelistic opportunity not only to build the volunteer labor of people into the material fabric of the rural church but, what is more important, to enroll these people into the membership of the church and a fellowship with Christ. Whether it be a new building or the remodeling of the old one with necessary additions, if it is made a great inspiration in its inception and if this spirit is kept alive by festival observances as various sections of the work are finished, it can become an outstanding religious activity.

The day of the one-room church is past. We are speedily approaching the time when every rural

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church will see the necessity of providing special rooms for worship, teaching, and social and recreational activities. When we get big enough, and broad enough, and religious enough to make such provisions, and to finance the church so that competent leadership can be employed, then we shall be better prepared to direct the social activities of the community and to develop the moral and religious life of the people. Some marked progress toward this goal has taken place in recent years. Wherever the church has launched out with such a program of building and equipment, and has provided leadership to carry it on, there has come a response and an awakening in the life of the community. Thousands of rural churches are now facing a decision on the point of this enlarged program of equipment and leadership that will determine their future.

The church, moreover, ought to be the most beautiful building in every community. It, of course, should be different from all the other structures of the village. It is a church, and therefore in a class by itself. This has many times been lost sight of in the building, and as a result we have buildings that look like barns; or, if they have been built in more recent days, they often pass for garages or fire stations. It is important that the exterior be designed to give the appearance of a sanctuary. The atmosphere of worship should be conveyed by the architecture. The country churches of England are perfect examples of

what we have in mind. They are not necessarily large, or elaborate, or expensive. Beauty is never ornate, but grows out of simplicity and a sense of fitness to the surroundings.

Every church should be designed to fit the particular situation in which it is to be located. The trees, the land immediately around, and also the distant landscape should all be taken into account as forming part of the community life of which the sanctuary is to become the center. For this reason, if for no other, expert advice by an architect thoroughly experienced in the field of church architecture, and familiar with the work of the church in meeting modern needs, is exceedingly important. In all too many cases the planning of rural churches has been left in the hands of people whose only experience has been in designing homes or commercial buildings; or—what is even worse—in the hands of some hammer-and-saw carpenter. Many such persons have given their services unstintingly, and we hesitate to seem ungrateful. But we insist that the planning and designing of the church is a specialized task, and of such importance that it should be entrusted only to thoroughly competent persons.

The grounds around the country church should be landscaped in the most beautiful way possible. Here, where nature is ready to help, surely we should give God a chance to express his love for us in those tokens

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of tree and flower that give the crowning touch of beauty to life. There is little excuse for the neglected, barren, and often disgraceful condition to be found around rural churches. Even where we may not be able to rebuild the church, the very least we can do is to clean up the grounds; go into the woods and secure some native shrubs and plant them around the church; repair the front steps and gravel the path to its door. The state colleges of agriculture are usually willing to assist in such landscaping when a church is sufficiently alive to request the service. A day's work or two will accomplish much, if a plan is made well ahead of time by a committee that has vision and imagination.

Every church should have a neatly designed bulletin board. This should be placed at the most strategic point for the convenience of those for whom the information is intended. There are a number of such bulletin boards or wayside pulpits for sale by the various manufacturers of church equipment and by commercial houses, but care should be taken to see that they are artistic and simple and in character with the church. Too often a commercial standardized article does not fulfill these requirements.

Information and guidance on church building and renovation can be secured from the Interdenominational Bureau of Architecture, 105 East Twenty-second Street, New York City.

## A NEW RECREATIONAL LEISURE-TIME PROGRAM

The new day in rural America will call for a much more adequate direction of leisure-time and recreational activities. Every tendency toward change in rural life points to this, and in the carrying out of this work every available social agency may have a part. It is most desirable, however, that the rural church participate actively in the direction of these activities.

In some cases it will be necessary for the rural pastor to set aside more or less extended periods of his own time for this work. Under other conditions, local committees which he can organize and inspire will be able to relieve him of much of the detail. Teachers and other public school leaders will participate. In spite of all these local resources, however, there seems quite definitely to be emerging a need and a demand for a more highly trained and specialized leadership in this field, and some way must ultimately be found to provide it for groups of communities which, for this purpose, can be handled as a unit.

Wherever the leadership comes from, it must take into account all ages and all special groups. There should be provision even for the very young children of pre-school age, who on certain occasions can be assembled at the church for recreational activities, thus enabling them to begin the formation of pleasant church associations. Even more attention must be given to children of primary age. Programs,



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hours, and general plans for this group should take into consideration the school and home demands and necessities. Provision should be made for boys and girls, as they get old enough for work in the 4-H Clubs or in Boy and Girl Scout organizations. Over-night hikes will be necessary for certain groups; and summer camps for intermediates and young people will be only one feature of a year-around program. Likewise, many special events and activities of a social and leisure-time character will be planned for adults. On a still larger scale will be community and inter-community picnics, pageants, and other related programs. These will involve people of all ages and will tend to knit the social life of varied groups into something of a common whole.

In all this provision for the use of leisure time and for recreational activities, the ideals of education and moral and social benefit will go hand in hand with pure fun, which, to a considerable extent, may be justifiably considered as an end in itself, or certainly as a very direct means for achieving important social values.

### A NEW RURAL MORALE

Fundamentally, the present situation calls for the restoration of the morale of country people. They have suffered heavily, not only in the recent so-called depression years, but since 1920. They have lost the value of their crops; they have lost their purchasing

power; they have lost their farms and their homes for which they have struggled for years. If, in addition, they should lose their courage and their hope for the future, their loss will be great indeed. The very last thing they can afford to lose is their nerve. If only faith in God, in themselves, and in rural society can be maintained, rural people can rebuild a civilization better worthy of the name. To help recover and maintain this morale is one of the prime responsibilities and opportunities of the rural church. If the rural people can be held steady during the readjustment that must necessarily be made; if they can be helped to possess their souls in some measure of confidence, I am certain they can face the future and win out. The church must take its place in this social and economic reconstruction; it must be the mediator of a living faith which will be of basic importance in the development of a new morale.

Too long have rural people been made to feel a certain sense of inferiority. This must be changed. To secure in rural people a new respect for themselves, their standards of living and working and worshipping, and in urban communities and churches a new appreciation of the place of rural life and people in the nation, is imperative. The church must play an important rôle in this re-education of the nation and of rural people themselves. Time was when we acclaimed the farmer as the backbone of the nation. Indeed, we said it so often and with such

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enthusiasm that we came to believe it. A way must be found to restore something of this ideal. Agriculture is the primary industry, and the welfare of the people who choose to spend their lives in this vocation must be regarded as a matter of primary importance. Unless we realize the fundamental importance of this statement and govern ourselves accordingly, we are standing in the way of national progress.

To achieve this new sense of values and to establish these basic appreciations in the mind of the church at large is fundamental to rural religious advance. It is important as a great missionary obligation. It is important as a great social obligation. It is important in the interests of national morale, in the building of the nation's life, and as part of an evangelistic crusade to Christianize America.

The attitude of denominational officials and the church at large is a tremendous factor in the situation. Something has been accomplished in the effort to give the rural church and its ministry a larger recognition. But much remains to be done. The idea still prevails that the rural church is of less importance than the city church, that it is a good place to start one's ministry, and, if nothing better arises, to retire to in old age. But as a place for investing one's whole life ministry—well, that is another question. The idea too often obtains that there must be something wrong with a man if he does not, in due time, get out of the country church. These and similar in-

ferences are doing much to undermine the rural ministry and to make impossible the building of a vital program of religion in the country church. When this attitude is present in the supervising officials, the problem is difficult indeed. Where the reverse is true, things are being accomplished. In some areas responsible officials are giving time and attention to the rural church as something worth while on its own account. Under such leadership the rural ministry takes on new life.

Most of the supervising officials of the denominations are now selected from city churches. They often know little about the modern problem of the rural church. They can, however, identify themselves with those movements that are seeking to give new impetus and inspiration to rural life and the rural church, and they can, on every occasion possible, give expression to the value and significance of the rural church and its ministry to the total religious enterprise. Such attitudes on the part of official leaders always help greatly in revitalizing the rural church and in the upbuilding of the rural ministry.

Rural people themselves are often at fault in their attitude toward their own life and the rural community. In many situations rural people have been educated to believe that it is a mark of distinction to have their pastor leave for a city church. He is being promoted. I have heard rural church people express themselves as follows, when they have a rather supe-

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rior man as their pastor: "Well, we cannot expect to keep him long, he is too good a man to stay in a place like this." With such a conception of themselves and their community, progress is slow and difficult. The nation seeks to rebuild the morale and character of rural people. Only so can we be assured that the new order will be better than the old.

### NEW STANDARDS OF RURAL SUCCESS

Although we are eager to have rural people hold up their heads and to see developed throughout America a new sense of appreciation of the dignity and importance of rural life, it does not necessarily follow that rural America should undertake to duplicate city culture and city modes of living. There are some basic differences which those who choose the rural way of life must take into account. In the city, where people are crowded closely and where many families live in one building, it may not be an undue extravagance for each family to secure heat from a central heating system without the expenditure of more energy than is involved in turning a thermostat needle a small fraction of an inch. To duplicate the same convenience for each country home might involve, in many instances, a larger expenditure than the total price of the farm. The farmer is entitled to be warm, but he may be compelled to secure heat by the most economical method which his particular circumstances would seem to suggest. The same prin-

ciple applies to air conditioning and other services which are often taken for granted in the city.

It is encouraging that rural people are willing to adjust their lives to a scale of values more nearly within the range of the normal resources of agriculture and rural life. Rural people have sometimes tried to live upon a basis of costs that was beyond the ability of the average farm and rural community to sustain. We must remind ourselves that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." Rural people must learn that, in order to achieve success and a measure of happiness in the country, it is not necessary to introduce into rural life all the things that are common in the cities.

In this there is a choice of values, for city people of means are often deprived of advantages which the humblest rural dweller may have without money and without price. That the standards of an urban culture are necessary for the country is a false idea, and it has cost rural people untold agony. They are not through with it yet. A valiant fight will be necessary to protect rural people from the promoter and the propagandist who are out to "sell" the city to the rural dweller. Rural people will not solve the problems of rural community life by importing the standards and facilities and culture of the city into the country. On the contrary, where this has been done, it has brought disaster. Communities that have



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adopted this plan are struggling under a burden of taxes and mortgages to pay for services that they cannot continue.

We have learned to sow and to reap more efficiently, and how to make two blades of grass grow where only one grew before. But we still have to learn how to live. That, after all, is the most important consideration. The crowning achievement and the primary function of the country church is to teach rural people how to live. While we have made marvelous progress in the material realm, we have not made similar progress in the discovery and development of new and greater moral and spiritual ideals. Long before the radio and the automobile, the self-binder and the combine harvester had come into existence, men had learned some of the deeper things that have never failed to satisfy the inner longings of people. I am convinced that in spite of the pressure and the noise, the hurry and the rush of our modern life, there are multitudes of people who appreciate rural life and all that it offers. There are farmers who, after the day's work is done, and the cattle are safely housed in the barn, like to walk over their freshly ploughed fields, and smell the fragrance of the newly turned earth, feel it beneath their feet, and see in the distance the coming stars and be content. They have seen God. Such people deserve the best the church can give. There are enough of these men and women in rural America to offer a new challenge



to all rural institutions, and especially to the rural church.

That rural life contains the elements of a satisfying culture, that it can escape the false ideals that have so recently taken possession of it and return to a culture that will not depend upon so many things that are artificial, are convictions firmly held by many thoughtful Americans. Such a culture will have its roots in growing things, the mystery of the good earth, the beauty of the countryside, its possibilities for friendliness and neighborship, and the cultivation of an intelligence and a religion that will be related to these everyday experiences. To such an adventure in rural readjustment I challenge the country church.

We must recover the spiritual values of work. Apart from its economic importance, and considered for the moment in the light of its moral and religious value, there is much to be gained in restoring this sense of value to the vocation of agriculture and its related tasks. Most people have some concern as to their value in the world. To discover this personal worth, to provide a place in which it can find expression, these are matters of supreme importance. For most people the only chance for this discovery and expression lies in some worth-while work that must be performed five or six days a week. That is certainly true of rural people.

Our mechanized and industrial civilization is crush-

ing out much of the opportunity for religious expression in the daily task. This has not happened in the same degree in agriculture. The farm still provides an outlet for the worship of God in work. It is true that the machine has also affected agriculture. There is a place in which the machine can and ought to be used. We cannot and we ought not to return to the primitive and monotonous hand and foot toil of the older agriculture. The slavery and drudgery of that era can be relieved by machines, and a way must be found to make possible for rural people a reasonable share of those machines that will lift the loads from their backs, relieve them of that deadening toil and give them time to enjoy recreation and culture. Machines must be made the servants of the race. But when this has been done, it should be possible to find a joyous expression of wholesome personality in the doing of the daily task. The farmer is more important than the farm. Agriculture must be made the means to an end, and not be considered as an end in itself. The rural church can point the way to a program in which making a living will be an integral part of living, and in which rural people will find opportunity to express their highest ideals and achieve life's noblest purposes in the work they do.

Country people are in great need in these days, but the one thing without which all other needs will go unfulfilled is in the realm of inspiration, hope, and the consciousness of the values that are inherent in

country life, of the ethical rightness of their cause. They must be given a sense of direction that will enable them to determine the true goal of life and inspire them with courage to proceed toward it. To be the bearer of this gospel of hope to country people is the distinctive privilege of the country church. It should be the means of a renewed spiritual vitality for church and preacher, for which they might thank God and take courage.

Fellowship, good will and cooperation are key words in the new social order now in the making in rural America—a fellowship as broad as the human race, a good will which is as inclusive as that of Jesus himself, and a cooperation which involves every person, every denomination, and every agency seeking to make a better America and to bring people into closer brotherhood with one another and with our heavenly Father. Given such a spirit and purpose in the hearts and minds of those who represent the rural church, there is hope for a better day for the rural people. We can then look forward to the coming of the kingdom in the rebuilding of rural America.

## READING LIST

THE following brief reading list has been selected as representative of the works which provide background sources for a study of the church in rural America. The views of the writers of these books are not necessarily in harmony with those of the author. Students of the subject desiring a more complete list of titles are referred to "A Guide to the Literature of Rural Life," compiled by Benson Y. Landis. This may be ordered from the Department of Research and Education of the Federal Council of Churches, 105 East 22d Street, New York City; price, ten cents. Leaders of adult study groups using *Rebuilding Rural America* as a text will find helpful suggestions for planning their course in a pamphlet specially prepared for this purpose by Benson Y. Landis and entitled "The Church and American Rural Life." This is available from denominational literature headquarters for twenty-five cents. From the same source valuable pamphlets and bulletins issued by the several church agencies may be secured.

### GENERAL

- Farmer and His Community, The.* E. D. Sanderson. New York, Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1928. \$1.25.  
*Holy Earth, The.* Liberty Hyde Bailey. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1917. \$1.50.  
*Oberlin, a Protestant Saint.* Marshall Dawson. Chicago, Willett, Clark & Co., 1934. \$1.50.  
*Our Rural Heritage.* James M. Williams. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1928. \$4.00.  
*Rich Land, Poor Land.* Stuart Chase. New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1936. \$2.50.

## 206 REBUILDING RURAL AMERICA

- Roots of America, The: A Travelogue of American Personalities.* Charles Morrow Wilson. New York, Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1936. \$3.00.
- Rural Communities in Depression Years.* Edmund de S. Brunner and Irving Lorge. New York, Columbia University Press, 1937. \$3.25.
- Rural Social Trends.* Edmund de S. Brunner and J. H. Kolb. New York, McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1933. \$4.00.
- Social History of American Agriculture, The.* Joseph Schafer. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1936. \$2.00.
- Study of Rural Society, Its Organization and Changes,* A. J. H. Kolb and Edmund de S. Brunner. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co., 1935. \$3.50.
- Woman on the Farm, The.* Mary Meek Atkeson. New York, D. Appleton-Century Co., 1924. \$2.00.

### THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT

- Brotherhood Economics.* Toyohiko Kagawa. New York, Harper & Brothers, 1936. \$1.50.
- Christianity and the Cooperatives.* Benson Y. Landis. New York, The Council for Social Action of the Congregational and Christian Churches, 1936. 10 cents.
- Consumer Cooperation in America: Democracy's Way Out.* Bertram B. Fowler. New York, Vanguard Press, 1936. \$2.00.
- Decline and Rise of the Consumer, The: A Philosophy of Consumer Cooperation.* Horace M. Kallen. New York, D. Appleton-Century Co., 1936. \$2.75.
- Denmark—the Cooperative Way.* Frederick C. Howe. New York, Coward-McCann, Inc., 1936. \$2.50.
- Sweden, the Middle Way.* Marquis W. Childs. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1936. \$2.50.

### EDUCATION AND YOUTH

- Agencies Contributing to Rural Education.* Alice A. Pierce. Washington, National Education Association, Department of Rural Education Bulletin, February, 1932. 35 cents.

- Character Education.* Tenth Yearbook of the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association. Washington, D. C., The Association, 1932. \$2.00.
- Children at the Crossroads.* Agnes E. Benedict. New York, The Commonwealth Fund, 1930. \$1.50.
- Country Life Programs.* Proceedings of the 1935 American Country Life Association Conference. New York, The Association, 105 E. 22d Street, 1936. \$2.00.
- Girl in the Rural Family, The.* Nora Miller. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1935. \$1.50.
- How Shall Country Youth Be Served?* H. Paul Douglass. New York, Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1926. \$2.50. (Out of print.)
- Rural Adult Education.* Benson Y. Landis and John D. Willard. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1933. \$1.75.
- Status of Rural Education, The.* Part I of the Thirtieth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Bloomington, Illinois, Public School Publishing Co., 1931. \$1.75.

## THE CHURCH IN RURAL AMERICA

- Building the House of God.* Elbert M. Conover. New York, Methodist Book Concern, 1932. \$2.50.
- By the Waters of Bethesda.* J. M. Ormond. Nashville, Department of Education and Promotion, Board of Missions, Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1936.
- Christ of the Countryside.* Malcolm Dana. Nashville, Cokesbury Press. \$1.00. (Ready summer of 1937.)
- Christian Enterprise among Rural People, The.* Kenyon L. Butterfield. Nashville, Cokesbury Press, 1933. \$1.50.
- Christian Program for the Rural Community,* A. Kenyon L. Butterfield. Nashville, Cokesbury Press, 1928. \$1.50.
- Church and the Agricultural Situation, The.* Addresses and reports of a National Conference on the Rural Church, held in Ames, Iowa, November, 1936. New York, Home Missions Council, 105 E. 22d Street, 1937. 50 cents.

208 REBUILDING RURAL AMERICA

- Country Church and Our Generation, The.* Edwin E. Sundt. New York, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1932. \$1.50.
- Country Church and Public Affairs, The.* Henry W. McLaughlin. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1930. \$2.00.
- Country Church as It Is, The.* A. J. W. Myers and E. E. Sundt. New York, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1930. \$1.50.
- Hinterlands of the Church.* A Study of Areas with a Low Proportion of Church Members. Elizabeth R. Hooker. New York, Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1931. Now available through Harper & Brothers. \$1.75.
- Home Missions Today and Tomorrow.* Hermann N. Morse, editor. New York, Home Missions Council, 105 E. 22d Street, 1934. Cloth, \$2.00; paper, 75 cents.
- Larger Parish, The: A Movement or an Enthusiasm?* Edmund de S. Brunner. New York, Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1934. Now available through Harper & Brothers. 50 cents.
- Our Templed Hills.* Ralph Felton. New York, Council of Women for Home Missions and Missionary Education Movement, 1926. Cloth, 50 cents; paper, 25 cents.
- Rebuilding the Town and Country Church.* Elbert M. Conover. New York, Interdenominational Bureau of Architecture, 1928. 50 cents.
- Rural Church Today and Tomorrow, The.* A Report of the National Conference on the Rural Church, held in Washington, D. C., January, 1936. New York, Home Missions Council, 105 E. 22d Street, 1936. 50 cents.
- Rural Religion and the Country Church.* Warren H. Wilson. New York, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1928. \$1.25.
- Steeple among the Hills.* Arthur W. Hewitt. New York, Abingdon Press, 1928. \$1.75.
- United States Looks at Its Churches, The.* C. Luther Fry. New York, Institute of Social and Religious Research, 1930. Now available through Harper & Brothers. \$2.50.
- What's Right with the Rural Church?* Ralph A. Felton. Philadelphia, Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, 1930. Cloth, \$1.00; paper, 50 cents.



SPECIAL GROUPS

*The Rural Negro*

*Cotton-Growing Communities*, I and II. Benson Y. Landis and George E. Haynes. New York, Federal Council of Churches, 1934. 15 cents each.

*Preface to Racial Understanding*, A. Charles S. Johnson. New York, Friendship Press, 1936. Cloth, \$1.00; paper, 60 cents.

*Rural Negro, The*. Carter G. Woodson. Washington, D. C., Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, Inc., 1930. \$2.50.

*Shadow of the Plantation, The*. Charles S. Johnson. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1934. \$2.50.

*The American Indian*

*Facing the Future in Indian Missions*. Lewis Meriam and George W. Hinman. New York, Council of Women for Home Missions and Missionary Education Movement, 1932. Cloth, \$1.00; paper, 60 cents.

*Indian Americans*. Winifred Hulbert. New York, Friendship Press, 1932. Cloth, \$1.00; paper, 60 cents.

*The Southern Highlander*

*Backwoods America*. Charles Morrow Wilson. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1934. \$2.50.

*Cabins in the Laurel*. Muriel Earley Sheppard. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1935. \$3.00.

*Economic and Social Problems and Conditions of the Southern Appalachians*. Washington, D. C., United States Department of Agriculture, Miscellaneous Publication No. 205, January, 1935. 50 cents.

*Great Smoky Mountains, The*. Laura Thornborough. New York, Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1937. \$2.00.

*Highland Heritage*. Edwin E. White. New York, Friendship Press, 1937. Cloth, \$1.00; paper, 60 cents.

*Land of Saddle-Bags, The*. James W. Raine. New York, Coun-

## 210 REBUILDING RURAL AMERICA

- cil of Women for Home Missions and Missionary Education Movement, 1924. \$1.50.  
*Machine Age in the Hills*. Malcolm Ross. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1933. \$2.00.  
*Religion in the Highlands*. Elizabeth R. Hooker. New York, Home Missions Council, 105 E. 22d Street, 1933. \$1.00.  
*Southern Highlander and His Homeland, The*. John C. Campbell. New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1921. \$3.50.  
*Southern Regions of the United States*. Howard W. Odum. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1936. \$4.00.

### *The Migratory Worker*

- Roving with the Migrants*. Adela J. Ballard. New York, Council of Women for Home Missions and Missionary Education Movement, 1931. (Out of print.)  
*They Starve That We May Eat*. Edith E. Lowry, editor. New York, Council of Women for Home Missions and Missionary Education Movement, 1937. Illustrated. Paper, 35 cents.

### *The Mexican*

- Mexican in the United States, The*. Emory S. Bogardus. Los Angeles, University of Southern California, 1934. Cloth, \$1.60; paper, \$1.25.  
*Mexican Labor in the United States*. In three parts. Berkeley, University of California, 1933-1934. Part 1, 30 cents; parts 2-3, 50 cents each.  
*That Mexican!* Robert N. McLean. New York, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1928. \$2.00.

### *The Filipino*

- Filipino Immigration*. Bruno Lasker. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1931. \$4.00.  
*Oriental in American Life*. Albert W. Palmer. New York, Friendship Press, 1934. Cloth, \$1.00; paper, 60 cents.  
*Out of the Far East*. Allan A. Hunter. New York, Friendship Press, 1934. Cloth, \$1.00; paper, 60 cents.